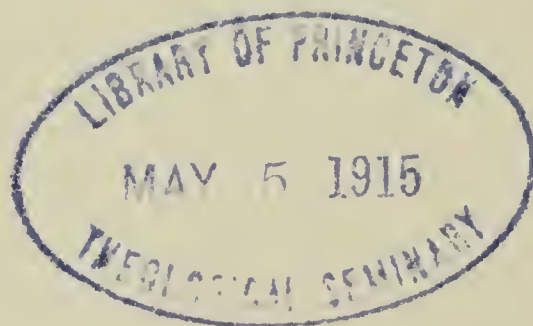


# The Proof of God

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*HAROLD BEGBIE*



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The proof of God





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# THE PROOF OF GOD

BY  
✓  
**HAROLD BEGBIE**  
Author of "Twice Born Men"



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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

**S**INCE no two philosophers and no two men of science use terms in precisely the same sense, I feel that it is not greatly laid upon me to offer either explanation or apologies for the simplicity of the language with which I have ventured to trespass on their two spheres. Nor does it pressingly seem to me a bounden duty that I should adopt a placatory pose on the score of my book's brevity, since length, too often the mere stammer of obscurity, is only excusable in the original philosopher.

My modest book, the first word in a trilogy, does but attempt to gather up and present in a companionable summary the discoveries and speculations of those learned men so far in advance of the general host that they have almost forgotten the Doric of humanity. Futurism, which is rebellion against dulness, pomposity, and the groove, may perhaps in its thrust for reality give us some day a race of philosophers so lucid and so charming

that they will actually by their own speech help the multitude of mankind to think less untruthfully and to behave less mistakenly. In the meantime, one who has been a happy and attentive guest of the philosophers may be allowed his gossip and his table-talk in the homes of the simple.

H. B.



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"The region of Religion and the region of a completer Science are one."—OLIVER LODGE.

"Since the germ of life appeared on earth, its history has been a history not only of gradual *self-adaptation* to a known environment, but of gradual discovery of an environment, always there, but unknown."—F. W. H. MYERS.

"I see everywhere the inevitable expression of the Infinite in the world."—PASTEUR.

"While it may be possible, setting out from mind, to account for mechanism, it is impossible, setting out from mechanism, to account for mind."—JAMES WARD.

"The grand law of continuity cannot fail to be true beyond the narrow sphere of vision."—A. R. WALLACE.

# I

## CONCERNING ORIGINS

**I** WAS walking from Mr. Bartlett's admirable establishment in Grosvenor Street to Westminster Abbey, following the way which leads by St. James's Street to St. James's Park, and had just crossed the road opposite Marlborough House, when I was overtaken by my friend Rupert, whose stride had the pace and imperial misgivings of political perturbation. He caught hold of my arm, and turned to make examination of my face. "Incorrigible Idler!" he exclaimed, "are you not stirred by these events? are you not alarmed for civilization? do you not feel that it is a time when patriots should take to action?"

"Let me reflect!" I replied. "No, Rupert, I don't think I do. On the other hand I feel that it is a time for patriots to stop talking, particularly the front-bench patriots of the House of Commons whose repetitious oratory I find quite intolerably tiresome. Now if the honest plain men on the back benches——"

“My friend,” he said gravely, “the fabric of society is in danger; the foundations on which our civilization has rested for a thousand years are beginning to totter. We are on the brink of civil war. If you knew what I happen to know as a fact—— But the son of Sirach tells us we are not to repeat what we hear. ‘Hast thou heard a word? Let it die with thee: be of good courage, it will not burst thee.’”

“But, Rupert,” I continued after this admonishment, “people who speak about the fabric of society, always make use of that term in a manner which attributes considerable beauty, exquisite order, and an almost finical perfection to the structure which they ask us to believe is threatened with collapse. To you, my dear Rupert, who sleep in a clean bed, eat your breakfast at what hour you choose, select your day’s raiment from cupboards, wardrobes, and chests of drawers crowded with fine things, and who need do nothing at all from one hour to another in order to insure a continuance of these pleasant circumstances for the rest of your life, even bequeathing those luxurious circumstances to your heirs,—to you and such as you, this structure of civilization must seem a very wise and admirable achievement, something so magical and providential that to lay a

rough hand upon it, nay, to call it only a hard name, necessarily partakes of the nature of blasphemy. But for masses of men, and for masses of women—particularly weak and delicate women who work in our soulless factories, or who are sold into very foul iniquity, or who find their natural maternity a curse instead of a glory—your fabric of society is a Bastille, a Newgate, a Bedlam. Always remember this fact, I beg you, when people speak with twittering misgivings of the social fabric. Always remember the foundations.”

“Of course there are drawbacks and imperfections; but what can we do to alter them?”

“You are going to the House of Commons,” I answered; “tell me, for what purpose?”

“To avert a revolution!”

“Then surely,” I said, “you are not a patriot, but an enemy of the people. For only a revolution, I am very sure, can make this muddle of human life tolerable to poor people. Do you want things to go on as they are? That is impossible. Evolution is not only change, but creative change.”

“You tell me,” he demanded, “that you actually desire to see a revolution?”

“I cannot help myself, Rupert: I hunger



and thirst—will you believe it, I *pray* for a revolution.”

“ Can you contemplate, without horror and without dreadful anxiety, the rage and hatred and bestial passions which take possession of men’s minds in periods of political violence? Is our condition so bad that only devilries such as marked the French Revolution can work amendment? Upon my soul, I am almost ashamed to be walking with you! ”

“ My dear Rupert, I am no whit more bloodthirsty than you, and I certainly do not desire to see any such revolution as your Parliamentary brain immediately conjures up. Why are the rich always in a state of fear concerning the poor? Why is it that Toryism carries about with it so guilty a conscience? I desire to see a revolution at the centre of life, not along the distant circumference. In other words, I desire to work where the politician never works, at the souls of men. Now, do you feel safe? ”

“ Ha, the soul! ”

“ You laugh quite happily; there is now no rattle in your throat! ”

“ You are preposterous! A moment ago you were talking like an anarchist; you are talking now like a parson. This is not a time for wild words or pious humbug. It



is a time for calm thinking and wise judicious well-considered action."

"Then you think that life has no centre?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"You do not believe in the soul?"

"Nobody does."

"Nor in God?"

"You are very old-fashioned."

"Let us sit down for a moment," I said, laying a hand on his arm; "and let us talk about my revolution."

"Well," he said, taking the chair at my side and pulling his fine trousers over his knees, "I would rather talk about your revolution than your God, for a revolution may come, but God has disappeared for ever." As he said this, he gave me a look, and when he had finished speaking, he contemplated his white gaiters, satisfied.

"But my revolution is also my God," I made answer.

"You must be simple and direct in your speech," he said, "or I shall leave you."

"For the front-bench patriots? Yet you have heard all that they have to say hundreds and hundreds of times. They never change. That is their boast."

"At any rate they are men of action."

"Well, thought is necessary to action, so let us see how we can prepare your mind

for these men of action whose acts, you will grant, are continually plunging the nation into disorderly and excited crises—crises, by the way, Rupert, which do nobody any good. I will tell you what my revolution is, in a single phrase. My revolution is to make men and women believe in a very obvious fact, namely, the existence of God. If men and women were profoundly convinced that God exists there would be a bloodless revolution; we should all begin to act like rational creatures. The trouble in the political world is caused by greediness—the same appetite which gives stomach-ache to little boys; the clash of nations and classes is the collision between the unpardonable greediness of those who have great possessions and the pardonable greediness of those who have few possessions. Greediness is the enemy; and the only cure for greediness is God. It would be impossible for anyone to overeat himself in the presence of God; and it is impossible for any man who has a real sense of God in his soul to want to overeat himself. But people don't believe in God, and because they don't believe in this only reasonable Cause and Object of existence, political life is always in a condition of confusion: there is a struggle to get at the trough."

“ You speak surely like a crazy fellow,” he said, “ when you aver that the existence of God is a very obvious fact. I should be inclined to doubt your reason if you spoke of God as a poetic hypothesis, or as a convenient postulate; but when you dare to tell me that the existence of God is a very obvious fact, why, I must conclude either that you are crazy or that you wish to insult my intelligence.”

“ So you have made up your mind, Rupert, that there is no God? ”

“ Yes.”

“ You have no doubts about the matter? ”

“ None whatever.”

“ Then you think that there is no mystery in life? ”

“ I am not so stupid as to think anything of the kind.”

“ At any rate you know enough to see that there is no need of a God. You have evidence——”

“ Science teaches us that the idea of God is a superstition. The whole movement of science is away from myth to reality; the further we get from myth the more we take possession of nature. Nature will never be completely under the dominion of man until he has ceased to dream of any other world than this.”

“ Oh, I love to hear you talk, Rupert! You can’t think how endearing your fresh, frank, honest conversation makes you; and it is so reassuring—reassuring I mean for those who want a political revolution. And there is some truth in what you say, a good deal of truth, although you begin with a supposition that is entirely false. You must really allow me to protest against that erring supposition before I proceed to suggest another line of thought to your mind. You say that science *teaches*—what a bold word, my politician!—science teaches that the idea of God is a superstition! Now, only a member of Parliament or a member of that equally comic body, the Rationalist Press Association, could make such a mad asseveration as this. Science teaches nothing of the kind, Rupert. Science teaches nothing at all in the sphere of theology or religion. But in the discoveries of science, men who understand the laws of evidence and appreciate the limitations of language may still find reasons, though not the chief reasons, for believing in the existence of God. I shall present to your mind our modern idea of God, first with the evidence of science to support me, and afterwards with the reasoning of philosophy to complete my argument—philosophy which unifies and completes the detached sciences.



With science alone I could make out a very good case for the existence of God, but with philosophy I can compel you to agree that the existence of God is an obvious fact of the universe."

"I am amazed to hear you speak so dogmatically," he said, "but I suspect that you think to puzzle me with unusual words and to overawe me with an exhibition of casuistry. My friend, I am not to be caught in that fashion."

"On the contrary, Rupert, we will use the language of conversation, and our logic shall be the simple logic of common sense and honest thinking."

"Very well then, I will listen to you."

"You are a very dear obliging fellow. Now will you tell me, Rupert, first of all, what is the most obvious fact of human experience? "

"The world which we inhabit."

"I will agree, though I had hoped for a better answer."

"What did you expect me to say? "

"Life."

"Life is certainly as obvious as the earth; if it helps you to be brief I will amend my answer to suit your question."

"That is accommodating, nay, kind and generous of you, since I think you take me for an enemy. Well, I will accept your

amendment, for it is the truer answer. The most obvious fact of human experience is Life. We cannot be positively certain of anything else. The very world which we see with human eyes, the very sounds which we hear with human ears, the very sensations which we feel with human nerve-centres, may be altogether different from that which they seem to us, may, indeed, have no permanence at all in reality. But Life,—that is fact. *Cogito, ergo sum.* Look at these little sparrows, too, dusting themselves close at our feet: at those imported pelicans solemnly reposing under the trees: at those snow-white children of Leda thrusting their sinuous necks under the water: at this very handsome but bored policeman coming towards us in boots which entirely destroy the pleasure of walking: at this terrier tugging a little girl by its head, and barking like an angry politician as it approaches that unexcited retriever,—here we have Life, Life which is at once the most obvious fact of human experience and the supreme mystery for the man of science and the philosopher. Rupert, what is Life? Have you ever asked yourself that question—you who are so industrious in seeking to alter the conditions of Life? What is this thing to which we give the name of Life? ”



“The politician cannot afford to ask such questions or to weave any meticulous definitions. Life is mystery. Nobody knows at present what it is, perhaps nobody ever will know. I shall light a cigar, for I see now that you are in one of the very worst of your Socratic moods.”

“But Life is here? ”

“Clearly.”

“You are sure of that? ”

“Well, of course. One sees it in others and one is conscious of it in himself.”

“Now tell me, Rupert, how did Life begin on this planet? ”

“Do you want me to summarize Darwin and Haeckel? ”

“I want you to tell me how you account for Life, since you have done away with a Giver of Life.”

“Well, that is easy enough. Life is the result of evolution. It began in some slimy substance which men of science call protoplasm.”

“I will not ask you to account for protoplasm, which is itself living matter. I will not ask you to account for evolution. Those would be hard questions for you, Rupert, albeit with your political brain I am quite sure you would very easily elude a God in framing your answers to them.

Nor will I ask you to explain your cart-before-the-horse affirmation that *Life is the result of evolution!* No; I will ask you a very much simpler question. Will you tell me how this protoplasm came to the earth? ”

“ How it came to the earth? ”

“ Yes,—how this Life Substance got here? ”

“ But it is part and parcel of the earth. It didn't get here at all. It was in the earth and of the earth from the very beginning.”

“ Then you must tell me how the earth became the earth.”

“ That is easy, too. I happen to know all about that,—it's a part of the nebular hypothesis. By every school of science it is now accepted that the earth was once part of the sun; the sun boiled up the earth; the earth got as far away from the sun as gravitation would allow and then, answering to the pull of the sun, proceeded to revolve round its parent, like a good and obedient little boy. The match which I just threw away existed in the sun before the earth had started to make a career of its own.”

“ How easy, as you say, to explain the earth! ”

“ Well, it is undisputed that such was

the earth's origin; at least it was a few years ago, for I heard a lecture by——”

“ But Life—your magical protoplasm? ”

“ I don't understand you.”

“ You have told me, Rupert—quite absurdly—that the earth came from the sun. That is so absurd that I won't stop to tell you how absurd it is. The earth did not come from the sun; it was, however, compacted of the same materials as exist in the sun, and at one time was very much like the sun. But I am not interested in rocks and water; I am not interested in stubborn inorganic matter: I am interested in delicate, fictile, and evolving Life. Did Life come from your sun, or from sun-like materials? ”

“ Potential Life was certainly in the sun or of one substance with the sun. Everything on and in this earth was once in the sun. Tennyson, by the way, speaks of the fluid haze of light which eddied into suns—that wheeling cast the planets. I'm not such a fool as you think! ”

“ You tell me, then, that your protoplasm was part and parcel of the sun? ”

“ At any rate, it was part of the same nebula as the sun.”

“ How hot is the sun? ”

“ How hot? Several times hotter than I should care to say.”

“ And protoplasm existed in that great heat? ”

“ Why not? ”

“ But, my dear Rupert, you can boil a germ to death with hot water. How could your delicate Life Substance contrive to exist in roaring whirlpools of molten liquid? Consider for a moment. The hottest water of which we have knowledge must be colder than ice in comparison with such heat as bubbles in the sun. If hot water can destroy the germs of life, how could they have existed not only *in the sun*, as you say, but on this earth, which for many millions of years must have been a flaming furnace? Now, this is a question which you must really answer. It is the greatest of brute questions. We want to decide how Life arrived on this planet. You told me that it was in the earth and of the earth from the very beginning; but at the next moment you told me that the earth came from the sun. If the earth came, as science assures us that it did, from the flaming nebula, it could not have brought its protoplasm along with it. It may have brought the scarlet top of the match which you just now threw away, but I defy you to tell me



that it brought an ounce of wax with it. Life, then, must have found its way into the earth, and millions of years after the earth leapt flaming from the nebula. How was it introduced? ”

“ That I cannot say.”

“ But you will agree with me that it must have been introduced? ”

“ I certainly do not see how it could have existed in the sun. That is an idea, I confess, which had not occurred to me.”

“ Or on the earth, during the immense period when the whole body of our planet was swathed in mountainous flames, and when the core of it was like molten brass? ”

“ No; I do not see how Life existed on the earth at that time.”

“ Then how did it come? ”

“ I tell you, I cannot say.”

“ But you are prepared to do without a Life-Giver? ”

“ I start with protoplasm, with the original Life Substance; beyond that I cannot go, science cannot go,—the origin of Matter is a problem utterly insoluble, I have heard that said by a man of science.”

“ But we must have some idea how this protoplasm arrived on our planet. You tell me that to believe in a Life-Giver is to be superstitious; you also tell me that

protoplasm could not have endured the blaze of the nebula and the heat of the cooling earth. Well, save me from superstition by teaching me how to account by mechanical means for the appearance of Life—even for ‘a few primitive protoplasts gliding in a quiet pool’! How came these apples into the dumpling?”

“You are presuming on my ignorance of science. If you were to put this question, which quite gravels me, to a physicist he would certainly be able to give you an answer.”

“Here you are again at your erring supposition, my dear Rupert! You have got it into your head that men of science have decided to do without a God, and all your opinions are swayed by this unfortunate misjudgment. What will you say when I tell you that the most eminent men of science during the last fifty years have seen no antagonism whatever between science and religion, and that many of them have been Christians—Lord Kelvin, for example, the most illustrious of them all?”

“I should want to have documentary proof of that assertion.”

“I will give you that proof on another occasion. In the meantime I wish to acquaint you with the answer which one man of science has been bold enough to give to



this difficult question of the arrival of Life on our familiar earth. Now, Rupert, you are not a man of science, but, in spite of being a politician, you have a residual sense of humour; I beg you to summon your humour to the front of your brain in order to welcome this explanation of a very brilliant man of science. He said that Life probably arrived upon this planet in a shower of meteoric dust."

"After the earth had cooled, I suppose?"

"My dear Rupert!"

"What have I said to amuse you?"

"You should have said nothing at all. You should have laughed. But you did not even smile. I am disappointed in you, Rupert."

"Is it absurd to suppose that protoplasm came to earth in a shower of meteoric dust? I am not so sure!"

"The answer is too great a joke for common sense and *too great an accident for science*. Science, Rupert, you will perhaps be surprised to learn, does not believe in accidents. No; I will tell you what science thinks about the matter. Science thinks, when it puts its feet on the fender, that the elements which go to make up protoplasm *did* exist in the earth from the first moment of its existence. The ele-

ments were there, not the protoplasm. Protoplasm, then, was an immense stride in the process of evolution; the first cell which answered to stimuli was a matter for considerable congratulation—the first amœba was what you would call a regular knock-out. Now, that is what science thinks when it is not at work, when it is not teaching, as you would say. It is a pleasing and an interesting hypothesis. But since science cannot witness, and therefore cannot describe the evolution of protoplasm, we are obliged, if we stick to exact science, to start with protoplasm; we are not allowed to go back to the elements of protoplasm. Well, I argue that the man who cannot explain to me beyond all question how protoplasm is what protoplasm seems to be, must not tell me either that he can account for protoplasm or that he can do without the hypothesis of God in his theory of the universe. In other words, Rupert, even accepting the theory, the mere hypothesis, that the elements of protoplasm did exist in the fire mist, and that those elements became protoplasm in the course of some æons, we must still ask (if we are to have a *complete* answer to the riddle of the universe, an answer which wholly excludes the other hypothesis of a Spirit expressing Himself in creation)

how those elements came to be, how they obtained their power to combine, how the nebula came to be, and how it obtained *its* power to combine in masses.”

“ Oh, but you are going back to the origin of origins! ”

“ Let us be perfectly frank and clear. I am not attacking science; I am not even asking it for explanations. Science does not profess to explain anything, and does not go back to ultimate origins. But I *am* attacking those men who conclude from what they think science teaches them that the very hypothesis of God is ruled out of the physical universe. I do not mean, Rupert, that because science cannot tell you the origin of things—the origin of the elements of the nebula, for example—that you must, therefore, believe in the First Cause of deistic philosophy, the First Cause who made things more or less well, more or less awkwardly, and then withdrew to see how they would work. But I do mean that you have no right to deny the greatest evidence of God’s existence, the evidence which exists in yourself, because science can give you a more or less complete description of the way in which physical things have arrived at their present state from a former state.

“ And I also mean that even accepting

every theory of science for things as they are, by the very fact that things are what they are and not what they were, a man may still see, even in the mechanism of the universe, reasons for belief in God—not the First Cause, in the bad sense of that term, but the Spirit that causes now. Men like you speak as if the mechanism of the universe not only made itself, but has now finished making itself. There is nothing doing in the universe; the wheels are turning and will go on turning till they stop, making nothing more. But can you even tell me how the movements of the satellites of Neptune and Uranus fit absolutely into the nebular hypothesis? What does astronomy say on the subject? Astronomy says, ‘the great evolution which has wrought the solar system into form has not yet finished its work; it is still in progress.’ Evolution, working with elements the origin of which we cannot determine, is still at work. The universe is not finished. Confess to me now, Rupert, that by no *fact* of science can you explain the existence of things as they are or as they were.”

“I will make that confession very willingly, but I do not say that a man of science, a follower of Haeckel, for example, would be so docile and obliging.”



“ But you will agree, all the same, that if Haeckel, or Laplace before him, had really and completely found the answer to the riddle of the universe, men so very eminent in physical science as Kelvin and Lodge could scarcely be so ignorant as to talk about God and to persist in worshipping the Idea of God. There must at least be an element of doubt in Haeckel’s answer to the riddle? ”

“ I confess that what you say about men of science surprises me.”

“ Well, I will proceed now to my second argument for belief in God, and after that, while you are giving yourself,—to no purpose, I fear,—a headache in the House of Commons, I will return to my home and draw you up a brief statement concerning the real position of men of science in this great concernment of God’s existence. For the present give me credit for being an honest, truth-seeking man, since I am not a party politician, and wholly disabuse your mind of the vulgar error that science is on the side of materialism. Listen to what I now have to say with no disposition in your mind to suppose that men of science would dispute my arguments. Sir George Stokes was once asked if it had been his experience to find that the greatest men of science were irreligious. He

replied, ‘ That has not been my experience, *but the reverse.*’ I assure you that it is as general now as it was in Bacon’s day for men of erudition, men of science, to believe in the existence of God. ‘ A little Philosophy inclineth Man’s Mind to Atheism; but depth in Philosophy bringeth Men’s Minds about to Religion.’ Atheism, throughout the history of the world, has been the exception, never the rule.’



## II

### CONCERNING EVOLUTION

“**W**HETHER the House of Commons,” he said, “is likely to give me a headache or not, I begin to suspect that you now intend to set my brain buzzing with ideas about the Absolute and the Infinite. And at the end of it all, my Lesser Socrates, let me forewarn you that I shall be no nearer to belief in a God. For I simply hate your transcendental philosophies.”

“You are thinking as a politician, Rupert. You are determined to vote with your party, whatever the arguments on the other side. But in this case, believe me, it is wise to cast your vote on the side of truth, for to find yourself here in the wrong lobby is not to muddle other people’s lives but your own. Life must be a muddle till people know why they are existing. At the present moment the world is as badly organized as would be the handiwork of a woman to whom someone has tossed needles, cloth, and cotton, but no pattern and no instructions. Men do

not know what they are making. They do not know why they are living. How can you have order without purpose, how can you have creative righteousness without a destiny? Do you think, for instance, that you would solve your political difficulties by reaching any such Utopia as I hear hearty democrats singing of in the jingle—

Eight hours' work,  
Eight hours' play,  
Eight hours' sleep,  
And eight bob a day?

If you think that, Rupert, let me take you through the suburbs of London, through the suburbs of provincial towns, through model villages and through Garden Cities, and demand of you if this is the end of evolution, the final reach of the human race."

"Time is passing," he said, taking out his watch; "you had something to say to me about a second argument for believing in God. I hate democracy—and particularly democracy in a model village. Let us try to forget it. There are more gentlemen in the Arabian Desert and the plains of India than in Oldham or Sheffield."

"My second argument, Rupert, will convince you that there is not only a Life-Giver but a Law-Giver, that is to say, that

God is not an unknown Something, but a Knowable Intelligence."

"I am ready to be persuaded."

"My first argument proved from science that protoplasm as we know it could not have existed in the nebula or on this planet in its earliest æons. My second argument is such a strong one that it can even accept that theory *pour rire* of the great Lord Kelvin, who would have us believe in a shower of meteoric dust. For you will see, Rupert, that the shower of meteoric dust, if it fell to the earth, came from somewhere else, and must have come, as Jupiter is said to have come, in a shower of gold to the arms of Danae,—that is to say, it must have come with the purpose and the impregnating power of a Divine Intelligence."

"I do not see that at all."

"Well, I will ask you a few questions. When you look upon the earth, do you see there order or chaos? "

"Some sort of order."

"So that the shower of meteoric dust, and the chemical elements of the original Life Substance, had in them a definite motion away from what we are obliged to call chaos and towards what seems to us like order? "

"Yes."

“ So that evolution began with a movement the aim of which was towards intelligence? ”

“ That appears to be the case.”

“ Science *teaches* us, Rupert, and quite dogmatically, that the movement of evolution is from the simple to the complex. In the elements of matter it is impossible to discover, even with the most powerful microscope, the smallest semblance of volition or self-determining power. The constituents of protoplasm are passive; as protoplasm they *become* active. The elements of protoplasm were assembled together—by whom? The elements were assembled, tiny cells resulted, Life began. And from these humble forms, evolution has built up structures so wonderful and so beautiful as the bodies of the gazelle, the thrush, the tiger, the bee, and Man. The invisible thing which enters protoplasm at a pin’s point, thrusts itself into the possession of hands, feet, eyes, ears: creates for itself the power to attend, the power to reflect.

“ Evolution, then, is another word for organization. Evolution first of all organized your inert matter, your mere chemical elements, and formed protoplasm; then evolution gave to protoplasm a thousand forms, a thousand directions; evo-



lution, in fact, has played a part very like the action of a creative God. It has forced matter to do its will. From chemical elements it has formed living matter: from living matter it has created mind. Stop a moment. Let us be sure that we understand this word *Evolution*. Remember, to begin with, that language is symbolism. Words are only signs. The word *song* is not music: the word *love* is not feeling: the word *pain* is not sensation. Evolution is a word which has become fashionable; it has assumed the portentous character of an infallible diagnosis. But, Rupert, no word is exact, no term is infallible; all language is poetry, the speech even of a man of science is symbolical. Do you know that while modern science refuses to use such terms as God or even Efficient Cause, it is driven to use such words as Nature and the Universe, of which no definition can be given, concerning which not one single scientific statement can be made?

“This word Evolution is the most inexact, most fallible, and most poetic of all the terms in science. It is something thrown out by man at a mystery which he just perceives to be at work in the universe. It is not the thing itself, but a sign for that thing. It is no more expressive or explanatory of the mystery than the



more beautiful word Skylark is expressive or explanatory of the bird which sings to us from the clouds. It is no more the mystery it denominates than the label on a rose-tree is the rose or the leaf of the rose-tree. Evolution is a name. It tells us nothing more of growth than the word motion tells us of a steam-engine."

"I see at what you are driving; but, in spite of your eagerness to get me into the region of poetry, where I should be very little at my ease, I know that when a man speaks of a steam-engine he means an engine driven by steam, and that when a man speaks of evolution he means development. The chicken evolves from the egg. The fact is plain."

"But the egg is a mystery."

"All the same, my philosopher, the man who sells you cooking eggs at twenty a shilling is perfectly content to be without knowledge of the mystery. All he wants is your shilling for his eggs."

"If he tell me that the visible universe, which includes his eggs, was created by God he has some excuse for his incurious contentment; but if he tell me, Rupert, on the other hand, that God is an exploded myth, and that science knows all we need to know about life, then I can knock him down with the first of his cheap eggs which

comes into my hands. Evolution, you explain to me, is development; that is to say, it is growth. But growth with direction. The egg of a hen does not hatch into a lizard, and the eggs of the queen bee do not hatch into butterflies. There is growth, and there is definite direction. Chaos is excluded. Organization is palpable. So that this thing which we call Evolution is obviously an orderly process, a method which has the impress of a very high intelligence.

“The egg of a hen, with only three weeks of heat, becomes a living organism—a thing which moves, which looks, which hears, which is conscious of fear and pleasure. We do away with the hen, and substitute the incubator. The same miracle takes place. But we cannot produce an egg. Benoist will make you a delicious egg for your luncheon basket, but not an egg that will hatch. To you this hatching of an egg may seem a mechanical process, but I assure you that for the greatest of men of science the coming to life of a chicken is a mystery. Believe it is not a mystery when materialists make an egg—a fertile egg—hatching out, let us say, a predetermined Cochin China or Minorca chick; in the same way we will all believe that animals have a language when they

write a book to tell us so. It remains, too, an insoluble problem whether the egg came before the hen or the hen before the egg. You have that on the authority of Oliver Lodge. We know nothing of origins. Science knows nothing of origins. Huxley, a materialist after your own heart, and as a man of science abler than Haeckel, calls it a well-founded doctrine that *life is the cause and not the consequence of organization—Life, Rupert, Life—the mystery of mysteries!*”

“Stop a minute, I want to get hold of that. You say that Huxley——”

“Huxley upheld the famous doctrine of John Hunter that life is the cause and not the consequence of organization.”

“I see what he means.”

“He means, Rupert, that a man who speaks of matter becoming life speaks like a fool, that evolution has not produced life, but rather life has produced evolution. You said to me a moment ago that evolution has produced life, uttering a heresy. You will now admit, since Huxley tells you so, that life is the cause of evolution. Life is not a consequence of anything. It is the cause of everything.”

“Yes, I can follow that.”

“So we find, first of all, that our protoplasm could not have existed in the nebula



nor on the earth in its earliest ages; and now we find that the evolution of this protoplasm must have been caused by life, must have proceeded from life, must have been directed by life. Men can make something slightly like protoplasm in their laboratories; but protoplasm does not make itself; it had to be made before there was a man able to make something even remotely resembling it. We come, then, to ask ourselves a question which cannot be evaded. If life is the cause of evolution, and not a consequence of evolution, if life could not have existed on this earth for many æons after its birth, but must have forced its way into this earth at a moment when the earth was ready to be fertilized—is it not possible that our term Evolution may be only a scientific synonym for that spiritual Life-Giver to whom the religious in all ages have given the august name of God? ”

“ I am in deep water. Evolution a synonym, a kind of alias, for God! I don't follow you there. Evolution is a process. God is a Being.”

“ But both are hypotheses, and scientific people use this term of Evolution in the same way that religious people use the term of God. The man of science says that Evolution has brought to their pres-



ent state the complex forms which inhabit the earth. The theologian says that no process could *direct* growth, that no process could from the amœba produce the complex structure,—in a word, that Life is the cause of evolution, and that evolution is Life in action. Well, Life in action is God expressing His power and His will. The philosopher and the poet, with the modern man of science inspiring them, say to the old-fashioned materialist (forgive me, Rupert, but you are almost charmingly old-fashioned in one or two things) that the term Evolution is only another word for growth, that growth is one of the profoundest problems which confront the intelligent mind, and that the word Evolution no more explains than the simple word Growth the phenomena of living forms. And the philosopher and the poet say that the question is clarified if the materialist will only perceive that his magic term of Evolution is a synonym, and nothing but a synonym, for that Energy, that Life, that Spirit which from the beginning of history man has recognized as the source of existence.”

“Let me interrupt you. I have been told that physical science has nothing whatever to do with the question of whether there is a God or not. It concerns

itself with visible phenomena and the behaviour of things. It decides neither one way nor the other whether behind the visible appearance there is a spiritual Reality. But you speak to me as if physical science had proved the existence of a God. I think there must be something very loose in your dialectic."

"Oh, but, Rupert, we agreed that this should be a conversation, that long words should be avoided, and that there should be no casuistry. Don't saddle me with a dialectic. We are simple men of moderate education, free from the pedantry of the schools, and rightfully employing language as it is used for every other purpose in life; and we are asking ourselves whether physical science, as a few materialists imagine, does away with the need of a divine hypothesis. It is a question which may be decided, so far as common mortality can apprehend it at all, without dialectics and without polysyllables."

"But are you not wrong in supposing that physical science has anything at all to do with the matter? That is my point."

"You are running away from your first position; but I am glad to answer so surrendering a question. I will answer it in this way. Science works apart from religion, but religion includes science. Sci-

ence cannot give us God; but it can give us, and in my opinion does overwhelmingly give us, reasons for trusting our intuitional sense of God. *There is nothing outside the domain of religion.* Religion is God, and God is in the Universe—perhaps *is* the Universe. You cannot examine a seed or a bird's feather or a molecule without laying your hands upon the things of God. When men of science profess that they have nothing to do with theology, they are in the position of a doctor examining a man's heart who declares that he is not concerned with the man's life within his body. The man of science, protest he never so scholastically, is engaged in the study of this physical universe, and from what he finds there a great multitude which sits outside will and does conclude that Intelligence is either a necessary or an unnecessary hypothesis of existence. The man of science, by his discoveries, helps us all to know the character of our environment, and man's environment is either a fortuitous concourse of atoms or a concourse of atoms with the will of God behind it and in it.<sup>1</sup> The man of science may not be concerned to decide these alter-

<sup>1</sup> "Nature not only provides the scenery and properties of history, but the actors themselves seem to have sprung from its soil."—*The Realm of Ends*. By James Ward.

natives, but every single discovery he makes must of necessity be evidence on one side or the other. Do not let us waste our time in a controversy so barren as this, but proceed to the conclusion of my second argument."

"Very well; I am content that you should continue in your own way, and I am happy to know that the conclusion of your argument is in sight. For it continually strikes me, even while I am interested in what you tell me, that to sit here discussing the hypothesis of God while the country is staggering on the edge of civil war is very much as if a man whose house is afire should get down a dictionary to look up some difficult term in metaphysics."

"But if the dictionary could give him power to put out the conflagration he would be wise to consult it. Suppose you go from me, convinced that this world is the creation of God, that evolution is the method of God for bringing a superman into existence, might you not have something in your mind which would colour what you say in the House of Commons, which would tend to rescue political truth from the rabble jealousies and self-interests of faction? "

"I would not go so far as that; but I am



prepared to be convinced of God's existence, if you can prove it to me. I recognize, I assure you, that an atheistical democracy is fatal to the social order."

"Well, you are so far persuaded that you can agree with me as to the unthinkable-ness of any theory which attempts to originate life with this flaming planet. Life came to the earth, pushed its way into the earth, and everything which science has discovered tends to an absolute conviction that life proceeds from life. Here, then, is a step towards a Life-Giver. The Life Substance is accepted; but behind the Life Substance must have been a Life-Giver."

"I do not see that."

"But do you not agree with Huxley that life came before and not after evolution?"

"This Life Substance may have been the self-existing matter of the universe. It may have been the absolute beginning of things. You can no more prove to me that this Life Substance needs a Life-Giver than you can explain to me how God existed without a beginning."

"You go too fast for me. I ask you to observe in the chemical constituents of your Life Substance a complete absence of power or volition. They are not living things. They themselves become the Life

Substance only when assembled and compounded. Left to themselves they would have continued to be what they were. But they became! Something moved these atoms of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen; something combined them into *complex* molecules. Science says, Evolution. Poetry says, The spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. For us, who are neither men of science nor poets, it is enough that something assembled the non-living elements, something began to act, something began to ferment there. Now, whatever this something really was, we are face to face with another mystery of origin. The dead Matter of the materialist *moved*. Whence came that movement? Do you answer that it was accident, or do you reply that the origin of motion is an inscrutable mystery?

“ I ask you if either of those answers really satisfies your mind when you perceive what is obvious, plain, and quite impossible to avoid, to wit, that this *motion* acts with intelligence and produces from passive specks of matter first an atom, then a knot of atoms, and afterwards bodies so marvellously complex and furnished with organs so miraculously adapted to their environment, that only a fool or a pedant could refuse to see Pur-

pose and Object in the process? Do you say that accident assembled the elements of protoplasm together, and that accident set protoplasm in motion?—I ask you, then, why nature is not a cataclysm? Why is it the solar system is not jumping about—afflicted with St. Vitus' dance? Do you say that the origin of motion is an inscrutable mystery—I ask you whether you do not at least recognize in that motion the qualities of intelligence—intelligence pursuing a purpose? Will you answer my questions, Rupert, or will you leave them? ”

“ Quite frankly I confess that the appearance of order and purpose in the world is an argument in favour of Mind—some form of mind. But the character and nature of that Mind no man can determine.”

“ I am going to give you a word, Rupert, which is poetry, science, and religion, all three in three syllables; I want you to hold this word before your attention, to brood upon it in the deeps of your consciousness, and to make it henceforth the very heart and soul of your philosophy. This word is the word Direction. Whenever you are inclined to mount the horse of Evolution and ride away from exact thinking, first of all saddle him and bridle him with the

thought of *Direction*. Evolution is a dangerously loose term,—it may mean to one man the sublime and beautiful method of God, to another the meaningless function of a blind and purposeless energy. But Direction pulls a man up. There is direction in nature,—all nature is governed and controlled by direction. Things are what they are, not at the hazard of cataclysm and chaos, but at the will of direction. There is ‘a rigorous concatenation.’ The something which moves—although it is not actually a God who cannot err—has intelligence. The movement itself has direction. The direction itself is environed by the rigorous concatenation of the universe. Astronomers can foretell eclipses and can postulate the existence of invisible stars, because the universe is orderly, because the machinery of the cosmos is set in definite motion. The sower can go forth sowing because the earth is not a buck-jumping ocean. The engineer can contrive appliances which minister to our comfort because the processes of material things are not the processes of anarchy.

“And by the same token the religious man can pray to God without superstition and without a moment’s doubt, because his perceptions assure him that there is a purpose and an object in all this orderly,



majestic, and most beautiful universe. Our intelligence recognizes His Intelligence. The child looks up to its Father. Dare you say that such order as you see in the processes of nature is the result of accident? Dare you say, and this is where the materialist breaks his shins against his own fence, that in the long chain of antecedent and sequence, that rigorous concatenation which you call evolution, there is not positive intelligence and positive direction? Not intelligence that is omniscient, not direction that cannot take a wrong turning (to this we will come later), but intelligence and direction. Dare you say that the mind of man does not see everywhere a Mind that is at least higher than his own? ”

“ No; I will dispute neither the order in the universe nor the direction and intelligence in Evolution. But all the same I cannot see that these things are arguments to prove the existence of a God with whom man has any concern, any immortal business.”

“ That is another question which we will discuss on another occasion. In the meantime I release you and set you free to illumine the House of Commons. For myself, when I have looked at a certain window in Westminster Abbey, I will go to my books

and prepare the statement for which you have asked me. We part, however, on the good understanding that Life forced its way here from outside this planet on which we dwell, that the forms of life which we now observe were evolved from unintelligent matter, and that in this evolution from formless dead matter to complex living organisms there is abounding evidence of purpose and direction. Man's intelligence perceives in the universe an intelligence greater than his own. You go as far with me as that? Well, we are nearer to each other than we first thought. Perhaps, my dear Rupert, you may yet find yourself at the head of that only revolutionary movement which can perfect and preserve the fabric of society. Now, let us walk. And you shall tell me what it is you know as a fact—something, was it not, about the edge of civil war? Dear me, but this is dreadful. And I understand it is to be a war between two bodies of Christians. Peter's sword, then, is out of its scabbard again."

### III

#### LETTER ONE: CONCERNING THE BELIEFS OF MEN OF SCIENCE

“MY DEAR RUPERT:

“A very clear-witted and honest-minded man of science, Sir James Geikie, Dean of the Faculty of Science at Edinburgh University, once made the following reply to a question concerning the faith of scientific men:—

‘It is simply an impertinence to say that the “leading scientists are irreligious or anti-Christian.” Such a statement could only be made by some scatter-brained chatterbox or zealous fanatic.’

“You are the unconscious victim, believe me, my dear Rupert, of a loose idea which has been floating about the world ever since the theories of Laplace, Darwin, and Haeckel got themselves into the heads of a few scatter-brained ‘rationalists’ and set their noisy tongues wagging to the rag-time music of atheism. You

believe that science has done away with the necessity of a God. You accept, without a moment's questioning, the Life Substance posited by Haeckel: you embrace the term *evolution* without stopping to consider that it is but a word: and you glibly account to yourself for all the beautiful and marvellous things in nature by the tremendously significant phrase 'struggle for existence,' without a moment's scepticism as to its limitations. And you are thus minded to accept these conclusions, thus disposed to do away with God, not so much because the arguments of rationalists convince you, not so much because you have thought the matter out for yourself, as because you are persuaded that men of science have abandoned what you consider to be the superstitions of religion. That is the bee in your bonnet.

"When we sat under the trees of St. James's Park this morning, with the stir and movement of life surrounding us, the encouraging breath of Spring in our faces, the pleasant warmth of the sun quietly cheering our human minds and blessing the earth about us with the welcome of resurrection, I was conscious throughout our conversation that all my appeals to your reason suffered in their cogency and conviction because of the unsympathy and



the antagonism in your mind, planted there by the erring prejudice that men of science are materialists, agnostics, and atheists. You would have been still harder to convert if we had held our discussion on a dark, lugubrious, Carlylean day in the shadows of a morose library: but even with the glamour of the open air, even with the beauty and constancy and affectionate charm of nature visible to your eyes and felt in all the motions of your mind, still did this erroneous and most fallacious prejudgment make a barrier between my arguments and your persuasion.

“ I am writing to you, then, in the hope of destroying utterly and for ever this false impression which holds you a stubborn prisoner within the walls of materialism. I want you to come out into the open and see existence with the eyes of reverence, worship, and thanksgiving. But, for myself, let me tell you, it would not weigh a feather in my judgment if every man of science in Europe and America were aligned with the grim forces of the Rationalist Press Association, thundering under the generalship of Mr. Joseph McCabe against the notion that any being inhabits this vast universe higher, more powerful, and more immortal than Mr. Joseph McCabe. I pay as much reverence

to poets and saints as to chemists and biologists. I am thoroughly sure that the intuition of Shakespeare gives men a much truer conception of life than the most careful attempt to make a harmony, a synthesis, of all the departmental sciences. But I am well enough acquainted with the impatience and the speed of modern existence to know that multitudes of people expect others to do their thinking for them, and that a great name in science has now a mightier value with the mob of all classes than has the voice of the Pope for the hearts of the faithful.

“ Well, let us see, Rupert, how many masters of science can be pressed into the service of atheism.

“ Sir William Crookes, one of the very greatest chemists in the world, a man who knows infinitely more about matter than Haeckel, writing to me only the other day, said: ‘ I cannot imagine the possibility of anyone with ordinary intelligence entertaining the least doubt as to the existence of a God—a Law-Giver and a Life-Giver.’ What can you say in answer to this, you who are not a chemist, you who only accept what you hear other amateurs say about science? This great and profound chemist, you see, gifted, too, with a rare imagination, cannot *imagine* how a man with

ordinary intelligence can entertain *the least doubt* as to the existence of a Law-Giver and a Life-Giver.

“ Sir Oliver Lodge, whom I shall quote later on, wrote to me on this subject the other day, saying that he had not got beyond Kant’s two main categories: ‘ The starry heavens ’ and ‘ The Moral Law.’ Individual characteristics of the visible world impress him, but he says: ‘ The Universe must be taken as a whole; and the phenomena of Mind, and the interaction of Life and Matter, seem to me the phenomena which most strongly establish intelligence, guidance, and control.’ In certain moods, some particular incident or detail may specially impress him with the power or the presence of the Eternal; but this he recognizes as a subjective feeling, often fleeting and, though useful no doubt when it occurs, hardly to be regarded as a strong argument. But Lodge looks at the Whole, and in the Whole finds Mind. Intelligence, guidance, and control—these three witnesses to the power of God, he says, may be seen at all times and in all places, enduringly, whenever a man surveys the Universe as a whole and reflects upon the interaction of life and matter.

“ Professor J. H. Gladstone once wrote



to a newspaper, saying: ‘I have known the British Association under forty-one different Presidents—all leading men of science, with the exception of two or three appointed on different grounds. On looking over these forty-one different names, I count twenty who, judged by their public utterances or private communications, are men of Christian belief and character, while, judged by the same test, only four disbelieve in any Divine revelation. Of the remaining seventeen, some have possibly been religious men, and others may have been opponents.’

“Sir George Stokes, who, you must know, my dear Rupert, was one of the very few *complete* men of science, ‘the Sir Isaac Newton of to-day,’ and in all other respects a very prince of men, laid it down as his belief that sceptics among scientific men ‘*form a very small minority.*’ He also said, ‘I know of no sound conclusions of science that are opposed to the Christian religion.’ Faraday, Clerk Maxwell, and Adams, the discoverer of Neptune, ‘were all deeply religious, Christian men.’ Sir Charles Lyell, Sir William Flower, and Professors Owen, Hooker, Mivart, Romanes, were religious men.

“But what will you say, Rupert,—will it, I wonder, take your breath away?—



when you learn that Lord Kelvin, the ‘Napoleon of Science,’ gives it as his conviction that ‘true Religion and true Science *harmonize perfectly*.’ Kelvin not only believed in God; he was a Christian. He once asked, Is there anything *so absurd* ‘as to believe that a number of atoms, by falling together of their own accord, could make a sprig of moss, a microbe, a living animal?’ Scientific thought, he said, ‘is compelled to accept the idea of creative power.’ And he told of a country walk with Liebig, when he asked that great chemist if he believed that the grass and flowers they saw about them grew by mere mechanical forces. To which question of Kelvin’s Liebig replied: ‘No; no more than I could believe that a book of botany describing them could grow by mere chemical force.’<sup>1</sup> Then we have the immortal Lister, one of the greatest benefactors of the human race, and one of the greatest men who ever lived, declaring that there ‘is no antagonism between the Religion of Jesus Christ and any fact scientifically established.’

“Max Müller said in an article entitled, ‘Why I am not an Agnostic’ :—

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, May 4th, 1903.

‘ I cannot help discovering in the universe an all-pervading causality or a reason for everything; for, even when in my phenomenal ignorance I do not yet know a reason for this or that, I am forced to admit that there exists some such reason; I feel bound to admit it, because to a mind like ours nothing can exist without a sufficient reason. But how do I know that? Here is the point where I cease to be an Agnostic. I do not know it from experience, and yet I know it with a certainty greater than any which experience could give. If any philosopher can persuade himself that the true and well-ordered *genera* of nature are the result of mechanical forces, whatever name he may give them, he moves in a world altogether different from my own . . . As Christians, we have to say, in the language of St. John and his Platonic and Gnostic predecessors, “ In the beginning there was *Logos*.” ’

“ Sir W. Thistleton Dyer said in *Nature*:—

‘ I do not see even the *beginning of a materialistic theory of protoplasm*. ’

“ Sir Oliver Lodge, who is certainly a prince among physicists, concluded a lec-

ture on the Tendency of Modern Science with these words:—

‘ If I have made myself at all clear . . . let me summarize briefly and rather crudely, and say from the scientific point of view, that the tendency of science, whatever it is, is not in an irreligious direction at the present time, that the realization of the unity of the cosmic scheme tends to faith, and not to unbelief or unfaith. We are beginning to realize that the whole scheme, so magnificent, so enormous, so immense . . . demands, in some only half-intelligible but real sense, an organiser, a manager, a controller, accessible to prayer, able and willing to help, in His own way and in His own time, but still always able and willing: not less, certainly not less, than we are.’

“ Sir Archibald Geikie says in *Elementary Lessons in Physical Geography*: — . .

‘ One grand object of science is to link the present with the past, to show how the condition of the globe to-day is the result of former changes, to trace the progress of the continents back through long ages to their earliest beginnings, to connect the abundant life now teeming in air, on land, and in the sea with earlier forms long since extinct, but which all

bore their part in the grand onward march of life, now headed by man; and thus, learning ever more and more of that marvellous plan after which this world has been framed, to gain a deeper insight into the harmony and beauty of creation, with a yet profounder reverence for Him who made and who upholds it all.'

“ Sir Robert Ball, addressing the Victoria Institute, said:—

‘ . . . we have ever brought before us the fact that there are innumerable mysteries in nature which can never be accounted for by the operations with which science makes us familiar, but which demand the intervention of some Higher Power than anything man’s intellect can comprehend.’

“ Professors Thomson and Geddes say in *Ideals of Science and Faith*:—

‘ . . . we are thus beginning to see, as a passing scene, a phase of a large drama, of which man is but an awakening spectator—a stumbling actor—that of the birth, the struggle, the death, yet the renewal and ascent of the Ideal of Evolution. Thus biological science must indeed become the handmaid of religion . . . ’



“ Professor C. Lloyd Morgan says in *The Interpretation of Nature*:—

‘ . . . a belief in purpose as the causal reality of which Nature is an expression is not inconsistent with a full and whole-hearted acceptance of the explanations of naturalism, within their appropriate sphere . . . it is not impossible to bring these views into harmony, if we accept the postulate that determining purpose is the reality which underlies the determinate course of phenomena.’

“ Sir Edward Brabrook, the anthropologist, said in a British Association address:—

‘ If it be true that the order of the Universe is expressed in continuity and not in cataclysm, we shall find the same slow but sure progress evident in each branch of inquiry. . . . This principle has, as I understand, been fully accepted in geology and biology, and throughout the domain of physical science—what should hinder its application to Anthropology? It supplies a formula of universal validity, and cannot but add force and sublimity to our imagination of the wisdom of the Creator. It is little more than has been expressed in the familiar words of Tennyson:—

Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one in-  
creasing purpose runs,  
And the thoughts of men are widened  
with the process of the suns,

and supports his claim to be “the heir  
of all the ages, in the foremost files of  
time.” ’

“Now I would ask you, before you come  
to any opinion on these quotations, to con-  
sider the following extracts which are  
taken from a book called *The Old Riddle  
and the Newest Answer*, by John Ger-  
ard,<sup>1</sup>—a book which very effectually con-  
verts into thin air the imposing thesis of  
Haeckel,—that thesis of which the biolo-  
gist, Frank Cavers, has said that it is ‘the  
laughing-stock of modern philosophers.’  
You will find in these extracts not only  
further reasons for believing that science  
is not on the side of atheism, but sound  
reasons for believing in God:—

‘That the Cosmos in which we dwell,  
the world of law, order, and life, has not  
existed for ever, we saw to be a truth  
enforced by the researches of physical  
Science, no less than by the clear teach-  
ing of reason. It certainly had a be-  
ginning, and there must be a cause to  
which that beginning is due,—a cause

<sup>1</sup> Longmans & Co.

capable of producing all which we find to have been actually produced. The material Universe and the mechanism of the heavens,—organic life with all its infinite marvels and varieties—animal sensation—human intelligence—canons of beauty, the law of good and evil—all these must have existed potentially in the First Cause, as in the Source whence alone they could be derived.

‘ Of Chance, enough has already been said. It is, however, worth our while to observe how constantly to the last Mr. Darwin was haunted by the consciousness that this was in reality the factor upon which his system must depend; and that it could not possibly account for much that he came across in nature. If, as he confessed, the sight of a peacock’s tail-feather made him sick, it was just because its elaborate beauty, to which no commensurate advantage can be supposed to attach, forbade the notion that his theory could account for it. So, of another still more marvellous instance in which Nature exhibits artistic power, namely the ball-and-socket ornament on the wings of the Argus pheasant, he writes:—

‘ “ No one, I presume, will attribute this shading, which has excited the admiration of many experienced artists, to chance, to the fortuitous concurrence of

atoms of colouring matter. That these ornaments should have been formed through the selection of many successive variations, not one of which was originally intended to produce the ball-and-socket effect, seems as incredible as that one of Raphael's Madonnas should have been formed by the selection of chance daubs of paints made by a long succession of young artists, not one of whom intended at first to draw the human figure.

“ That the Universe has a cause is no less certain than that the Universe exists, for of that cause it is the monument. . . . From such conclusions there is no escape; and since it is impossible to find the cause required within the world of material forces and sensible phenomena, it becomes no less obvious that it must be beyond, across the frontier which nothing material can pass.

“ Therefore, also, we know something concerning that Cause,—very little, perhaps, in comparison with what we cannot know,—but still something very substantial. We know that such a Cause exists. We know that it must possess every excellence which we discover in Nature,—all that she has, and more; since what she derives from it, the Cause of Nature has of itself. In it must be all power, for except as flowing from it



there is no power possible. Finally, as a capable Cause of law and order in Nature, and of Intellect and Will in Man, the First Cause must be super-eminently endowed with Understanding, and Freedom in the exercise of its might,—or it would be inferior to its own works.

“ “ So it is that, as Professors Stewart and Tait have told us, we must conceive of Him as not the Creator only, but likewise the Upholder of all things, while Lord Kelvin declares we are unmistakably shown through Nature that she depends upon one ‘ever-acting Creator and Ruler.’

“ “ . . . And so, in the words of Rivarol, God is the explanation of the world, and the world is the demonstration of God. The acceptance of a Self-existent, all-powerful, and intelligent Being can alone serve as a basis for any system of Cosmogony which satisfies our intellectual need of causation; while, on the other hand, the nature of this Being, as necessarily beyond the scope of our senses, can be known to us only indirectly thro’ the effects of which He is the cause.” ’

“ I must end, for it is now evening, and to write after dinner is not good for digestion. When I put down this pen, it will be to take up some charming author who

uses no barbarous nomenclature, who is not haunted by the necessity for a mathematical exactitude in expressing himself, and who is friendly, joyous, and full of a divine serenity because he recognizes that life is happily more real and more spacious than our explanations of the universe. But before I so prepare myself for sleep—I think it will be Sainte Beuve, though I have a sudden inclination to the Letters of FitzGerald,—I shall breathe to the heavens a little wishful prayer that your mind, Rupert, may be cleansed from the impurity of materialism, and that you may yet come to feel in the music of Handel and Beethoven a beauty more full of meaning for your soul than you have so far discovered in the rhetoric of front-bench politicians or in the statements concerning men of science made by your scatter-brained chatterboxes.

YOUR FRIEND.

“ *Postscript.*—It is Sir Thomas Browne; but I feel that FitzGerald will prove the eventual night-cap. Do you know the Dormative of Sir Thomas?—

“ The night is come, like to the day;  
Depart not thou great God away.  
Let not my sins, black as the night,  
Eclipse the lustre of thy light.  
Keep still in my Horizon, for to me  
The Sun makes not the day, but thee. . . .

“ He says of this Dormative, which he was wont to take bedward, ‘ I need no other *Laudanum* than this to make me sleep; after which I close mine eyes in security, content to take my leave of the Sun, and sleep unto the resurrection.

O come that hour, when I shall never  
Sleep again, but wake for ever.’

“ What a gracious gentleman! ”

## IV

### CONCERNING HYPOTHESES

**R**UPERT came to see me on the following Sunday afternoon, bringing into my room such a warm, fresh current of brightness and pleasure in life that I uttered a *laudamus* for an answer to my prayer. But he had hardly got seated in the most easy of my chairs before he burst out with an unprefaced pronouncement that the opinions of men of science concerning the existence of God had no more value than the opinions of butchers and bootmakers on any subject outside their butchering and their bootmaking. I perceived by certain of his terms that he had taken counsel over my letter with some able and distinguished philosopher, and therefore waited with interest and respect for the tail of his criticism.

“Science, you must understand,” he told me, “has nothing to do with religion. I warned you of this the other day. Science is concerned with the visible, tangible, and sonorous universe. And this is what—here he drew, somewhat self-consciously,



a paper from his pocket—Professor James Ward has to say about the matter:—

‘What we have to note is the existence in our time of a vast circle of empirical knowledge in the whole range of which the idea of a Necessary Being or a First Cause has no place. . . . If modern science had a voice and were questioned as to this omission of all reference to a Creator, it would only reply: I am not aware of needing any such hypothesis.’

He goes on to say:—

‘So far as knowledge extends all is law, and law ultimately and most clearly to be formulated in terms of matter and motion.’

Another very clever fellow, Professor Boutroux, says: ‘En entrant dans son laboratoire, le savant laissait à la porte ses convictions religieuses, pour les reprendre à la sortie.’ He says that science knows nothing of religion, that she remains an alien to religion. If you want his exact words I have them here: ‘La science, en soi, n’a rien de religieux, elle demeure étrangère à la religion.’ So you see that science has nothing to do with religion, and

that it can find no necessity in nature for the existence of God.”

“ We must think this over, Rupert.”

“ To me the matter is as plain as a pike-staff. Science has nothing whatever to do with theology. It has no more truck with religion than gardening has, or ship-building, or any other earthly concernment.”

“ But you tell me that science, which certainly is occupied with other things than theology, announces that God is not necessary to the phenomenal universe with which it professes to deal? ”

“ That is so. Let me read again to you what Professor Ward says: ‘ What we have to note is the existence in our time of a vast circle of empirical knowledge *in the whole range of which* the idea of a Necessary Being or a First Cause has no place.’ That is emphatic enough.”

“ Oh, the dogmatism I shall not dispute, Rupert; but you must allow me to amuse myself with the importance you attach to this coxcomb of a statement and with your evident ignorance of the volumes from which that statement is isolated. Let us examine the swaggering pronouncement, as if Professor Ward said it himself and said nothing else. Suppose you said to me, ‘ 2 plus 2 equals 4;’ I should say to you, ‘ Ru-

pert, you must have been at Cambridge;’ and full of admiration for the perfection of your arithmetic, I should not say to you, ‘How completely that sum of yours demonstrates the truth of God’s existence.’ But if you came brandishing your figures in my face, declaring that in proving 4 to be the sum of 2 added to 2 you had been able to do without the necessity for a First Cause, I should say to you, ‘My friend, in making that incongruous affirmation you cease to be a master in arithmetic and become a fool in philosophy; let me prove to you, as I can do very easily, that in adding 2 unto 2 and making the total 4, you can *not* do away with the necessity of a First Cause;—where, pray, do you get your head?—tell me, too, whence come these four things which you have added together?’ You must observe, Rupert, that science as science has truly nothing to do with religion: just as I, when I am arranging flowers in a vase or writing a letter about a puppy to my nephew in Gloucestershire, have nothing to do with religion. But if I said, in writing my letter or arranging my flowers, that God was not necessary to either occupation, I should cease to be an arranger of flowers and the writer of a letter; I should become in making that absurd statement a challenger of theology. So, in

like fashion, the man of science, whenever he presumes to see no necessity in the least department of nature for a living God, immediately becomes a disputant with theology, and must be brought to a condition of becoming penitence. Science, you see, can go about its work, with its religious convictions left at the door of its laboratory; nobody will question that procedure; but I assure you there is nothing more alarming in this action than you shall be able to discover in the man who takes off his coat to wash his hands or ceases to think about eternity when he examines the entries in his Pass-Book."

"Then you agree with me, at any rate in this, that science has nothing to do with religion?"

"I suspect the tendency of that statement, Rupert. Its tendency is to make the careless thinker suppose that religion is a matter of faith and of faith alone, that science contributes nothing to the reasons of belief. Science, as science, has nothing more to do with religion than a poet writing a tragedy or a painter drawing a portrait has to do with science. If there had never been any science at all, religion would have existed, as it obviously did exist before there was anything approaching to exact science. A carpenter in making a



door has no need of the hypothesis of a tree to account for the wood with which he works; and so long as he sticks to the business of door-making he is a carpenter, and as a carpenter has no concern with religion; but if he tells me that to account for his wood he has no need of the hypothesis of a tree, then he ceases to be a carpenter, does not speak as a carpenter, and proves himself very obviously to be a poor fool in both philosophy and common sense.

“And this is the precise attitude of science if it cease—which is very seldom—to describe things and if it proceed to declare that it can do without the hypothesis of God in accounting for the things which it describes. That is simple, obvious enough. But if science, as science, has nothing to do with religion, religion has something to do with science. Let us ask,—what is religion? Religion, in Creighton’s phrase, ‘means the knowledge of our destiny and of the means of fulfilling it.’ Science may have nothing to do with religion, but this aspect of religion has everything to do with science. ‘Spiritual things,’ says St. John of the Cross, ‘transcend sense, but that is because they already include it.’ Darwin, as every man sees very clearly, gave new vision to religion. Astronomy has widened and deepened

the religious imagination. To a religious man the microscope is a window into the infinity which he feels to be his home. We are happier for the majesty and unity of this divine demonstration—the universe. So while science may protest that it has nothing to do with religion, religion must insist that science is something more but nothing less than her handmaid. Our destiny!—has science, probing the laws of life, nothing to tell us there? This beautiful world on which we find ourselves!—does science, studying the laws of nature, discover nothing here to strengthen and confirm our intuition that things are things, because Creation has shaped them in the mould of purpose? Let science protest how it will, religion must make use of science. And when Professor Ward, who is not strictly a man of science, tells me of a wide field in which science can find no need of a ‘First Cause,’ I think of men engaged in science who assure me that I must conceive of God not as Creator only, but likewise as ‘the Upholder of all things,’ of Kelvin, who tells me that Nature depends upon ‘everlasting Creator and Ruler,’ of Rivarol, who tells me, ‘God is the explanation of the world, and the world is the demonstration of God,’ and of Lodge, who tells me that ‘the region of Religion

and the region of a *completer* Science are one.'

"What is it you have written on that piece of paper concerning laws? 'So far as knowledge extends all is law.' How partial, how incomplete a science! So far as knowledge extends!—how far is that? And Law! What does your Professor mean by *Law*? Has he defined that term? And after framing his definition, has he asked himself how from chaos came any law of any kind whatsoever? If there be laws, or anything resembling laws, I will examine them to see whether I can discover something of that which must be behind them, something which shall tell me news of the Law-Giver. Tell me now, Rupert, without quibble and without hair-splitting and without any painful excursions into metaphysics, whether there is not evidence in science, evidence from geology, evidence from biology, evidence from anthropology, and evidence from history, of growth, of evolution, of becoming? "

"Yes; there is certainly every reason to believe in evolution."

"You would speak about the laws of evolution? "

"Decidedly; I am not afraid to use language in a plain common-sense fashion."

"So that visible and palpable to our

understanding is a tendency in nature away from the simple to the complex, and upward from the lower to the higher? ”

“ Yes; I think so.”

“ Now a materialist after your own heart, Professor Huxley, denounces ‘ the use of the word law as if it denoted a thing, as if . . . it were a being endowed with certain powers, in virtue of which the phenomena expressed by that law are brought about.’ He declared that such a conception of the nature of ‘ laws ’ has ‘ *nothing to do with modern science.*’ Mach says, ‘ The law always contains less than the fact itself, because it does not *reproduce the fact as a whole*, but only that aspect of it which is important to us.’ So you will agree with me that the laws of nature are not the creators of nature? You will agree that the method by which a man arrives at the fact of 4 being the sum of 2 plus 2 is not the cause of numbers? ”

“ Yes; I grant that.”

“ So that behind the method of nature, behind the way in which we think nature works, there is something else? ”

“ A number of hypotheses? ”

“ But your authority, Professor Ward, tells you that ‘ so far as knowledge extends all is law, and law *ultimately* and *most clearly* to be formulated in terms of



matter and motion.' For him, apparently, for him certainly as you interpret him, there is no need of even one hypothesis. All is law."

"Well, proceed with your argument."

"Suppose a man told you that he could explain the chemical properties of an egg without the smallest reference to an egg-layer; surely you would say to him that the chemical analysis of an egg did not disprove the hypothesis of a hen. And if he insisted that the combination of the chemicals composing an egg was what it was by the very force of the laws governing those chemicals; surely you would insist that such a composition rather demonstrated than did away with the necessity of an egg-layer."

"That is reasonable, of course; but we happen to know that there is such a thing as a hen."

"I am only leading you to perceive, Rupert, that no laws, even, when they are formulated in terms of matter and motion (as if we knew anything about *matter* and *motion!*), can possibly explain the existence of things. Behind those laws, since laws are neither things nor agents, there must be something,—call it what you will—*something creative.*"

"I take it that Ward would admit the

possibility of something behind law. But he would probably assert that this something is so unknowable to man that to speculate about it is to cease to be scientific."

"He is more on my side than you think, Rupert; but at present I must point out to you that in this passage he allows that the idea of a 'First Cause'—the term is his, not mine—has no place in a vast circle of empirical knowledge. He will not admit, so far as you are acquainted with his argument, even the bare hypothesis of a 'First Cause.' "

"That is so."

"He comes to a halt at law? "

"Yes."

"And law is neither a thing nor an agent? "

"Well? "

"It is a process. Man observes nature, sees how things happen, and calls the method by which they happen a law. Does he cease to be scientific when he examines this process and endeavours to arrive at some definite knowledge as to the character and nature of that process? "

"I should say not. But I'm puzzled to know how you can examine a law—the law of gravitation, for example."

"But if a man find, throughout this

process, a distinct movement from the simple to the complex, a visible effort to educe the higher from the lower, does he cease to be scientific when he concludes that the laws of nature are the methods of a law-giver who is intelligently and consciously seeking to produce something—something that he desires should be produced? ”

“ Well, I am not entitled to answer that question, for I am not a man of science.”

“ Let me assure you, Rupert, that the man of science, the religious man, and the philosopher are working to one unifying goal. They are all truth-seekers. Truth is one. There is not one truth of the physical, another truth of the spiritual, and another truth of the philosophical: these are but the arbitrary divisions of departmental man. There is one truth of which every intelligent human creature is a seeker,—*the truth of Life*. Physical Science, if it stop at laws, throws up the sponge and ceases to be a truth-seeker; it remains a describer of methods, an observer of relations, and must for ever hold its tongue when men ask it for the truth of Life. Certainly it must never proclaim that it can do without the hypothesis of a God, or that it possesses one fragment of knowledge which cannot be pushed back for its final explication to an ultimate origin. You

spoke just now of gravitation. Gravitation is a name given to something seen to happen in nature. What gravitation is, how it is what it is, no man can say. Come; get away from these schismatics, and see life as a whole. Be honest and courageous, Rupert; say what you think as a man; and answer the reasonable question I have put to you."

"I am disposed to agree that a man is justified in the conclusion that the process of nature is evolution, and that to examine this process is to feel that nature is working to produce higher forms of intelligence from lower forms of intelligence. I will agree with you there."

"Excellent, Rupert! Now we can proceed without any troublesome hair-splitting. Visible in nature is the process of evolution, the struggle upward and forward. It is not a struggle in which strength gets the victory. It is a struggle in which the victory goes to intelligence. Nature, after many millions of years, produced, let us say, Isaiah. Centuries elapse, and she produces, let us say, Shakespeare and Isaac Newton. More centuries pass, and she produces Mr. Joseph McCabe. Evidently there is nothing mechanical in this process. Evolution does not grind out a definite improvement. But do you think that this



laborious and patient process, working with human materials, has exhausted itself in the production of Mr. Joseph McCabe?—Do you think that the evolution of literature culminates in the twopenny reprints of the Rational Press Association?—or, Do you think that the process is merely resting, merely drawing its breath, at Mr. Joseph McCabe, and that it will go on presently, with a stouter heart than ever, to evolve a creature even more intelligent, even more charming, even more modest than Mr. Joseph McCabe? ”

“ I do not see any greater reason why evolution should stop at this particular person than why it should stop at you or me. Who is Mr. Something McCabe?

“ Well, we have reason to hope that some æons hence, if humanity is compliant, this world will be inhabited by a race of very superior beings, a race of supermen, in fact; and in holding this hope we are neither unscientific nor superstitious. Now, Rupert, are we unscientific, are we superstitious, when we seek to inquire whether there is a cosmic purpose in this evolution which has its origin and its ultimate destination beyond the frontiers of our very tiny physical world? ”

“ Please explain yourself a little more fully.”

“ It is plain that Life came to this planet from outside. It is plain that, as laws have a law-giver, so Life has a Life-Giver. It is plain, too, that the elements of protoplasm do not possess in themselves the characteristics of Mind nor the faculty of direction to a conscious end. We must conclude, then, that Life arrived on this planet as an alien, that it took possession of this earth and colonized it with a purpose, and that since it did not originate with this earth, and is not the passive effect but the active cause of evolution, its ultimate destiny belongs to the universe, its ultimate goal reaches from the visible finite into the invisible Infinite. In other language, since it is reasonable and scientific to suppose that creation had a Creator, that Life had a Life-Giver, and that the laws of evolution had a law-giver, it is also reasonable and scientific to suppose that the Creator, the Life-Giver, and the Law-Giver, these Three being One God, One Spirit, and One Infinite, has a definite and probably an understandable purpose in the mechanism of the universe.”

“ I feel that we are leaving science, but I do not see that what you say is unreasonable or inconceivable.”

“ Very well, I will say that I have done

with physical science; but I will not admit that I have ceased to be a truth-seeker. All I care about is truth. I do not care, Rupert, if you will allow me to say so, the feather of a sparrow's tail whether my truth is scientific so long as it is truth. There was a deal of truth and no little knowledge in the world, you will agree, before the term science had been coined, and before men of science, inventing a barbarous language, had attempted to isolate themselves first from one another and then from the traditions of human experience. You know how Huxley defined science. He said that science is organized common sense. Let us be content with that. When I depart from common sense you shall pull me up and call me any name you like except a Tariff Reformer."

"Tell me, now, what you mean by a destiny for Life beyond the physical universe. You are approaching Immortality, I take it?"

"I am sticking to Life; I am watching its direction."

"I wonder how you will contrive to be scientific in that region!"

"I will keep to common sense, in any case. Life, Rupert, came from outside this planet. You admit that?"

"Yes."

“ It organizes, it evolves, it becomes? ”

“ Yes.”

“ It had a Cause? ”

“ Yes.”

“ It has a purpose? ”

“ You mean evolution? ”

“ Yes, Rupert, the movement from a lower to a higher form of intelligence.”

“ I have agreed to that.”

“ Then since Life is the *cause* of that evolution, not the effect, and since Life has come to this material planet from outside of it, we must obviously say that the organization, the evolution, and the becoming, which science makes manifest to us here, is a process brought by Life from outside of this planet and belongs therefore to regions beyond the frontiers of this planet. Life did not find evolution here; it brought evolution with it. Now, Rupert, I take you a step further. I ask you to see that man is the visible head of earthly creation. The Life-Giver, working with the process we call evolution, has produced man from the amœba, and man is higher in the scale of being than any other creature produced from the amœba by the Life-Giver, working with the same process we call evolution. The bird is more beautiful; the bee is more perfectly instinctive; the elephant is stronger; the stag is swifter. But



man is master. Born the most defenceless and helpless of all living creatures; not able to get upon his feet till a full year has passed over his top-heavy, fluff-covered head; unfitted to get his own food; and utterly bewildered by the sights around him—nevertheless man is the master of the earth, the head of creation; he holds dominion over all other creatures.”

“ He has developed his intelligence, his craft.”

“ There was intelligence, then, to be developed? ”

“ Certainly; but other animals have intelligence.”

“ Can you tell me, Rupert, why those other animals have not developed so precious a possession? ”

“ No; but I can see for myself that they stopped at a certain point of their development, whereas man has pushed on.”

“ Yet man and the animals came from the same protoplasm? ”

“ Yes.”

“ But in man there is something which no other animal possesses? ”

“ What do you mean? ”

“ What did you call it just now?—the faculty of pushing on.”

“ The animals have that same faculty,

but they have only used it as far as it served immediate needs.”

“ Then this faculty, common to man and animals, is to be found in protoplasm—that is, in matter informed, pushed, and directed by life? ”

“ Yes.”

“ But it works with greater energy in man than in the other animals? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Why? Why, Rupert? ”

“ I cannot say.”

“ But here is the whole pith of the matter. Man is vastly different from all other animals, so vastly different that it is absurd to compare him with any single creature, except anatomically. You can compare a sheep with a horse, a cow with a llama; but you cannot compare man even with an anthropoid ape. Man is sovran and alone. He invents, he discovers, he seeks to know. There is not one creature on the earth that can stand beside him.”

“ Well, you shall have it as you wish it.”

“ I have it because it is so. Now, Rupert, I am going to tell you, on the authority of two great naturalists, Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, that evolution does not account for certain faculties in man which differentiate him from all other

animals. Darwin could find no explanation in evolution for the highest forms of love and sympathy. And, by the way, Huxley could find in natural selection no explication for that quality in man which makes him poet, painter, and musician—the *feeling for beauty*. Evolution can account for the rhinoceros and the ant; but it cannot account for Shelley and John Keats. Wallace told me again and again that nothing in evolution can account for the musical and mathematical faculties in man.

“Have you ever thought about Music? It is, says Frederic Myers, something discovered, not something manufactured. No theory of evolution can explain its rise. The spiritual power which we call *genius* is essential to its true success. ‘It is not,’ he says, ‘from careful poring over the mutual relations of musical notes that the masterpieces of melody have been born. They have come as they came to Mozart—in an uprush of unsummoned audition, of unpremeditated and self-revealing joy.’ What do you make of music? Music is as great a fact of existence as earth-worms and crystals. Will Professor Ward explain music to us without reference to what he calls a ‘First Cause,’ will he explain its laws to us in

terms of matter and motion? There are laws of harmony, but those laws did not precede harmony. Man had been ravished and enchanted by the concourse of sweet sounds before ever he set about discovering laws of harmony. The laws of grammar did not give us language. The laws of mathematics did not give us the measurableness and the relations of things. Before man examined any of these laws he uttered his soul in music, he expressed his feelings and ideas in language, he assembled things together and constructed intelligent other-things."

"What quite are you driving at?"

"The incontestable and so obvious fact, Rupert, that man carries about with him the witness of a soul. Some men even think, Wallace for one,—though it is not in the least necessary to, and may even embarrass the spiritual theory,—that as Life came to this planet from outside, and was, in a poetic sense, if you like, an act of creation, so to the highest animal evolved from protoplasm came, when he was fitted to receive it, and from outside this planet, a soul, which was a second act of creation. Bergsonism, however, does away with this hypothesis. But of this I will speak to you when you spare time from your political functions to pay me another visit,



unless, of course, the country be meanwhile hurled into the turmoil of civil war. But before you go I must enchant your mind with some further views of Professor Ward than are found on the paper you were kind enough to bring with you. As it happens, Rupert, the two volumes of his Gifford Lectures, entitled *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, are on that table in my window, and I will get them and read certain passages to you—in case you should ever fall into the error of quoting him as a materialist.”

“I don’t profess to know anything about him; but the quotations I read to you struck me as remarkable.”

“He is a very able man, Rupert, but so close and continuous a thinker that you must always be careful to study the context of any of his utterances which seem to appeal to your prejudices. For instance, when he speaks about a vast tract of knowledge in which the hypothesis of a ‘First Cause’ is not necessary, he is stating a contention of some few men of science. He says himself:—

‘But vast as the circuit of modern science is, it is still, of course, limited. *On no side does it begin at the beginning, or reach to the end.* In every direction

it is possible to leave its outposts behind, and to reach the open country where poets, philosophers, and prophets may expatiate freely.'

The fact is, Rupert, that this vast tract of empirical knowledge, relative to what there is for man to know, is like a postage stamp in the middle of the Sahara—and a postage stamp torn to pieces and not to be joined together with the consent of those concerned in its production. Geology and Biology are not very good bed-mates. What do you think your authority has to say concerning materialism? He says: 'There is nothing that science resents more indignantly than the imputation of materialism.' He speaks of the gaps in science, gaps which become enormous chasms directly we think about them as plain, simple men. For example, '*There is no physical theory of the origin of life.*' The gap between the inorganic and the organic world is almost as infinite as space; the step from the lifeless to the living is a stride from eternity to eternity. Science, he says, can only get to work by 'taking living things as there.' In other words, science can only answer our riddle by ignoring the question. Science can only make God a Non-entity by refusing to con-

sider entity. Herbert Spencer, you must know, could not think without an Absolute: and as Professor Ward says:—

‘ It is worth noting, by the way, that “ this actuality behind appearances,” without which appearances are unthinkable, is by Mr. Spencer identified with that “ ultimate verity ” on which religion ever insists.’

In other words, God is essential to thought. When a few scatter-brained chatterboxes reproach religion with the hypothesis of God, we retort upon them first that they cannot do their own thinking without this very hypothesis: and, second, that science also works with hypotheses—that atoms and molecules are veritable hypotheses, that in dealing with these posited atoms and molecules, science replaces actual perception with ideal conception. Science works with hypotheses in a limited and material orbit; shall not religion make use of her one sublime hypothesis,—and the hypothesis which philosophers find essential to thought—in an unlimited and spiritual orbit? The attempt of physical science to exclude all other knowledge but its own is as futile as it is ridiculous. ‘ When Phenomenalism,’

says Bradley, ‘loses its head and, becoming blatant, steps forward as a theory of first principles, then it is really not respectable.’ Get into your mind, Rupert, this foundational information,—Science does not explain; it describes. Men of science describe to us, here and there,—only here and there—what is happening. They *account* for nothing—absolutely for nothing at all.”

“But what about Laplace? He surely accounts for——”

“Ah! that is an anecdote very prettily related in this same book. Wait a moment, till I find it. Here it is:—

‘When Laplace went to make a formal presentation of his work to Napoleon, the latter remarked: “M. Laplace, they tell me you have written this large book on the system of the universe, and have never even mentioned its Creator.” Whereupon Laplace drew himself up and answered bluntly: “Sire, I had no need of any such hypothesis.”’

“Rupert, I particularly like that phrase, ‘Whereupon Laplace drew himself up.’ Can you not see the straightening of that backbone, the hardening of the muscles, and the tilt upward of the gentle-



man's head? What a picture it would make—that historic scene! Think of it hung side by side with a picture of the bowed and broken Christ, crying, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ Laplace's superiority to God: Christ's despair of God!

“But do you not see, apart altogether from the immodesty of M. Laplace (who, in drawing himself up, Rupert, certainly transmitted from his will to his bones and muscles an order, but how transmitted and how carried out he could not tell us, though he could do without a God in his scheme of creation), that his statement really amounts to very little more than the statement of our carpenter that in making a door he has no need of the tree hypothesis? Laplace takes what he finds and describes it. What he doesn't actually see he imagines, takes for granted, postulates. He neither tells us how that which he found came to be, nor explains why it is what it is. Behind everything, be it vapour or fire-mist, or what you will, there is Origin; and to say that fluid haze or fire-mist has in itself the potentiality of everything that is and everything that is to be, this is only to assert that the Origin so determined the properties of that fluid haze or fire-mist.”

“You will admit, however, that physical

science is continually invading the spheres which were once in the possession of natural religion.”

“ That is also in Ward! Here it is, in the very first chapter, which you have read to some purpose, or was it read to you, Rupert? Rupert!—Rupert! was it read to you by someone to whom you had misrepresented my views? Never mind. Let us have it again:—

‘ God made the country, they say, and man made the town. Now we may, as Descartes did, compare science to the town. It is town-like in its compactness and formality. . . . All was country once, but meanwhile the town extends and extends, and the country seems to be ever receding before it.’

“ Where is the country, Rupert? Well, I will tell you. It is still where it was. It is the one solid foundation on which the town is built: it is the life-giving air which blows through those narrow streets: it is the sunlight which shines upon the walls of brick and stone, and it is the blue heaven above the chimney-stacks and the suffocating smoke-canopy, but above everything else is the foundation—the fact of What Is beneath all our superstructures. With-

out the country there would be no town. The town, with all its splendid temples and all its mechanical perfection of law and order, could not exist but for the solid rock beneath it. When an enemy takes a territory, though it put all the inhabitants to the sword, the territory remains. Science may take, it probably will take, all the territory which was once assigned to natural religion. But the territory will remain, even when the theologians of natural religion are every one slaughtered. Science may map it out, may measure it, may describe it with an exactness which natural religion never attempted, and perhaps never could have accomplished; but science will never be able either to account for the existence of that territory or to explain it.

“ The conclusion of the whole matter is here. Science neither affirms nor denies the existence of God. It cannot do either, because it has set itself a task which has nothing to do with the existence of God. It does not seek to explain, but to observe and describe. No man of science, speaking as a man of science, can say that there is a God or that there is not a God. But the least sectarian of men of science, those able to see the marvellous unity of this universal frame, can, speaking as men of sci-

ence, look forward and assert that ‘the region of religion and the region of a completer science are one.’ In the meantime, Rupert, you and I who know where the carpenter gets his tree from, and how the chemical properties of an egg were once included in a hen, may certainly ask men of science whether they feel as they work in their very small and disparate spheres of observation that it is more reasonable to believe in a God than not to believe in a God. Put that question to men of science, and you will find that the answer is the answer embodied in my very long letter. ‘The world itself is the Bible of Nature—the revelation of God to us as a Creator.’ Nature is not the watch; it is the watchmaker making the watch.”



## V

### CONCERNING A KNOWABLE GOD

“**O**NE thing I have decided for all eternity,” said Rupert, when he paid me another visit; and here, sitting forward in his chair, fixing an accusatory gaze upon me, he added with conviction,—“namely, that the Socratic method is devilishly one-sided.”

“Well,” I said, “I am perfectly willing that you should put on the philosopher’s robe and that I should play the part of Adeimantus or Glaucon.”

“Strangely enough,” said he, “that is what I wished to suggest to you; and, indeed, I have come so full of questions that I must begin at once, if you are to hear but a tithe of them.”

“Well, be brief in your questions and I will be as brief as truth allows in my answers.”

“The first question——”

“But, my dear Socrates, had you not better tell me, for a beginning, what is the thesis you have in your mind?”

“ You call me Socrates, but you begin at once to play the Socratic trick upon me. Please remember that it is not the function of the prisoner in the dock to put a question to the prosecuting counsel.”

“ But a prisoner is supposed to know the nature of the charge preferred against him.”

“ Well, I will tell you that my argument concerns the existence of a *Knowable* God. I agree that it is reasonable to conclude from the evidence we possess, both in physical science and in experience, that there is Something behind appearances, some kind of Law-Giver, some kind of Life-Giver; but I hold that it is utterly impossible for us to know anything about Him and that there is nothing to show that we are of any more concern to Him than the electrons of matter.”

“ Very well. Begin now with your first question.”

“ Is it possible for a finite being to possess knowledge of an Infinite Being? ”

“ It is manifestly not possible for a finite being to possess absolute knowledge of an Infinite Being; but it is also manifestly impossible for a finite being not to possess some knowledge of an Infinite Being, since the finite being is obviously an expression of that Infinite Being's Will.

When we speak of a man 'denying God' we mean that he denies this inner witness of the soul. He denies the existence within himself of the memory of his divine origin."

"Then you think that the only real evidence we possess of God is within us? How do you know, pray, that this consciousness of God is not a matter of auto-suggestion?"

"How do you know that you are sitting in my most comfortable arm-chair?"

"Come, now, you must not answer my questions with questions of your own."

"Very well; I will try another method. I do not say that the only real evidence we possess of God is the divine memory which each man carries in his soul. But I do say that this witness is the most perfect and assuring. There is evidence of God in everything, because God is the origin of everything. I am sure of God's existence when I look at the stars, when I walk in the fields and woods, when I read a book of science or amaze myself with a microscope. But my deepest and my most passionate sense of God's existence comes when I obey that command of the Most High, expressed by the lips of an inspired poet, *Be still, and know that I am God*. That is to say, I am most sure of God when

I do not interrupt His communications with irrelevancies of my own concern."

"Now, I want to know how you can be certain that you are not deceiving yourself. For instance, I am not sure about God's existence. Plenty of men are perfectly sure that He does not exist. How do you satisfy yourself that you are right, and the others are wrong? "

"If I were the only man in the world partially conscious of God, I should still hold my partial consciousness of God to be evidence of His existence. Such is the nature of this evidence that it is impossible for a man to deny it without committing intellectual and moral suicide. But when I find that the weight of numbers is overwhelmingly on my side, that, even if it be only intellectually or subconsciously, the millions of the earth acknowledge a God; when I discover that among the civilized nations those who have a living consciousness of God are the most pure, the most loving, the most virtuous, the most self-sacrificing, and the most uplifting members of the human family; and when I find that only a very fractional minority of moral men actually deny the existence of God,—then I feel myself justified in the conviction that it is rather for them to disprove the experience of humanity than it



is for me to question the sense of God which is inherent in me, and which I share, however dimly and weakly, with the majority of my fellow creatures."

"Do you tell me that you never doubt the existence of God?"

"Yes."

"I cannot believe you."

"That is only, Rupert, because you put a question which Socrates would have told you was too clumsy for the answer you desired. You threw a good fly, badly."

"Well, how should I have put it?"

"You should have asked me whether I do not sometimes doubt my notions about God."

"Ah, well, consider that I have asked you that question."

"I confess to you that very often I am troubled by such doubts. I cannot understand the methods of God. I cannot harmonize some of His laws with what I feel in my soul to be the truth of His nature. But of the existence of a God, of the existence of a Power not ourselves working by the process of evolution to an end which is cosmic and perfect, I never have, I cannot possibly have, one moment's doubt."

"Then you will grant me that to all intents and purposes this God is unknowable?"

“ I will grant you nothing of the sort.”

“ But you cannot understand Him? ”

“ I cannot understand Him absolutely, and I cannot understand entirely even what I do perceive of Him; but to say that He is unknowable for these reasons would be very much like saying that because I have not travelled over every inch of Africa and do not know perfectly every single part of Africa that I have travelled over, therefore Africa is not knowable. A God we could understand would be exhaustible by us; in fact, He would cease to be God.”

“ But you do know something of God? ”

“ I know something of God immanent in man and nature; and I know something of God in the history of the human race.”

“ Oh, of course, if you go to revelation——”

“ Well, you shall keep me in darkness if you like, if you are afraid to bring your questions into the light of historical experience. How you fellows funk St. Paul! ”

“ I certainly intend to keep you either to science or philosophy. Now, will you kindly take it that I am a visitant from another and a quite godless star, who is asking you for information about this particular planet, and will you tell me,—I who am entirely without a sense of God—why

I ought, as a rational being, to admit the existence of a God? ”

“ If you were a rational being you would not be entirely without a sense of God, for rationality is a function of the soul, which is divine. You yourself doubt the existence of God, but you are discussing that sublime hypothesis; you cannot deny that there is a possibility of God’s existence—and this is your inner witness of a divine origin: you, a finite being, can conceive of an Infinite Being. But I will imagine you to be the monster you suggest, and I will endeavour to answer your question,—albeit, I cannot, of course, convince you, any more that I could convince a bullfinch or a fox-terrier, since there is nothing in a monster to respond to the sense of God.

“ Now, Rupert, in answering your question, I should point you, first of all, to the greatness, the splendour, and the orderliness of the cosmos: I should ask you to see that this vast universe has continuity, a ‘rigorous concatenation,’ and does not behave with the eccentricity of cataclysm; I should then tell you that every living thing on this planet has evolved from a substance which could not possibly have been one of its original elements; and I should then point out to you that man, at the head of all living things on this planet, is so

vastly different, except in his perishable structure, from the other creatures which have been evolved from this same alien protoplasm, that it is reasonable to suppose he must possess a faculty not to be found, even potentially, in protoplasm. When I had convinced you on these heads, and when I had proved to you that physical science has no theory whatsoever concerning the origin of life, and that all its efforts to reach back into the past arrive only at a process and fructify only in descriptions of that process, I should then proceed to convince you that a man cannot do his thinking without the hypothesis both of a God and a soul."

"Let me interrupt you, or my questions will consume me. What do you mean exactly by saying that a man cannot do his thinking? "

"I should greatly like at this point, Rupert, to play the Socrates."

"Your answers are already long enough for Socrates multiplied by Plato a dozen times. But, by your leave, I will stick to my rôle. Now, then, what is your answer? How is it a man cannot do his thinking without the hypothesis of a God and a soul? "

"Let us suppose, Rupert, that evolution had ceased with a soulless man: let us sup-



pose that at the head of creation was a gorilla-man as unmindful of beauty, order, and knowledge as the other apes. There is nothing absurd in this supposition, since on any theory of anti-Theism man with a soul is merely an accidental result of a purposeless process. It is not inevitable but a wonder that he exists. Now, if man with his soul had not come into existence, if man had remained gorilla-man, this physical world would have kept all its secrets which man with his soul has dragged forth; and the wonders of beauty, order, and relation would have had no existence whatever in the consciousness of any single living thing. There would be no geometry, no chemistry, no astronomy, no physiology.

“Not only this. The earth would be swamp, desert, wilderness, and jungle. Not an acre of soil would be cultivated. Not a word would be uttered. Not one question would be asked. Life would not be aware of itself. Evolution would have come to a dead stop. ‘Were the World now as it was the sixth day, there were yet a chaos.’ It would have been, this very lovely and endearing planet, a place of skulls. But we cannot imagine, because the gorilla-man did not perceive the relation of one thing to another, that therefore

no such relation existed, that because he did not observe and reflect upon the uniformity of laws, therefore no such uniformity existed. And yet, on careful examination, we discover that there is no real relation of one thing to another, and no real uniformity of laws; in fact, we discover that the relation of one thing to another and the uniformity of laws exist in the perception of man's mind. Uniformity of laws is simply our uniformity of experience.

“ As Kant said very daringly, but very truly, ‘ The intellect makes nature, though it does not create it.’ A thing is round because the mind sees, let us say, that it is not square: a thing is green because the mind sees, let us say, that it is not scarlet: a thing is in motion because the mind sees that it is not stationary. But on our original supposition that man with his soul has no existence, and that gorillaman cannot perceive the relation of things, must we say that there is nothing round or square, nothing green or scarlet, nothing in motion or at a standstill? Clearly we cannot make this assertion, for these things obviously were in existence before man had risen on the earth to observe them and reflect upon their differences. If they are what man's mind perceives them to be,

such they were before man was born on the earth. Coal was in the soil millions of years before man kindled a fire or manufactured gas to light the streets of his towns. Chloroform was in existence millions of years before man made it a way of escape from physical pain. That which we call ether filled space, and brought to our earth the light of the stars, brought to our eyes the vibrations of all objects, how many thousand years before man discovered that he could transmit speech and thought by tapping it with a needle of steel? These things have a veritable existence, and if man had never risen to a condition to discover them, still they would have had that veritable existence. Effects followed causes, continuity threaded the entire and intricate operations of nature, beauty was beauty, and evolution was in labour with the elements of protoplasm, before any living creature stirred upon the surface of the earth.

“ Was there, then, no mind to know that effect followed cause, that continuity existed, that beauty was beauty, and that evolution laboured to produce the higher from the lower, until a man was born? That is as much as to say, what science itself proclaims an utterance of madness,—that evolution produced mind. Very cer-

tainly mind preceded matter. Beyond all question mind *anticipated* the relation of one thing to another thing before those things themselves existed. And man, gradually labouring, discovers what the Original Mind anticipated. The sun does not perceive that it draws moisture from the earth, and the moisture is not conscious that it has relation to the sun; but all that man observes in nature, every separate perception, every disconnected experience, is united into one body of cognition by the spirit in man—that spirit which is the ‘active, unifying principle, the ground of self-consciousness and self-determination.’ The connection of one thing with another is not a nexus in those things themselves, but is an observation of man’s intellect. It is mind which discovers the unity of nature by possessing a unifying principle in itself. If man’s mind discovers unity, that unity must have existed in the Mind which preceded matter. What is that Mind? The Mind which is the origin of things is God. Man perceives a unity in nature because God is immanent both in him and in nature. On the other hand, Rupert, nature, as anti-Theism presents it to us, is a machine;—a machine which has produced mind, but a machine, as your friend Professor Ward has told us, which



could not start itself, cannot alter or stop itself, and possesses neither for itself nor for us the smallest degree of purpose,—it is a continuous process without cause and without destiny! But science has been driven from such a contention. It was Huxley himself who came to say that ‘*our one certainty* is the existence of the mental world’; and it was Herbert Spencer who said that the idea of the Absolute was essential to thought. If you think you will become aware that God is necessary to your thoughts; the more profoundly you think the more certain will you feel of God’s reality.”

“It is time I got in another question. Now, I quite agree with you that mind existed before matter, and that matter exists for mind. But I do not see that mind is anything except a name for the Unknown, and I certainly do not see that the fact of one original Mind justifies the enormous assumption that man possesses a soul. Tell me, then, how you connect the one idea with the other?”

“Come, Rupert, I do not think that the connection between mind and mind ought to present any serious difficulties to an intelligent person. I am content, for myself, to know that as life can only proceed from life, so mind can only proceed from

mind. And since it is obvious that original Life is greater than the derived life, and original Mind greater than the derived mind, I do not scruple to attribute to the original Living-Mind every power and every feeling which I possess myself, but in a transcendently greater degree. This gives me a God who loves, a God who is good, a God who is truth, and a God who creates. And when I ask whether the fragment of this God which I possess in my spirit is immortal, I answer that since the Giver is of necessity immortal, so, too, my spirit, a part of Him, must be immortal."

"Do you mean that your personality, or your mind-principle, is immortal? "

"My identity is I myself. It is that which alone is immortal. As I am not my hands, so I am not my headache; and when my hands have perished and my brain has perished, I shall persist."

"But are you not your brain?—some kind of union or synthesis of your nerve-centres? "

"Clearly I am more than that. I love. I can lay down my life for my friends. You can wound me with a word."

"But your personality is made up of your brain? "

"The brain is the machine by which I work, the piano at which I play, the tel-

ographic instrument by which I receive and transmit messages; but it is not I myself. Think for a moment. Everything I see enters through the lens of my eye as an etheric vibration. This etheric vibration beats upon my optic nerve and produces—what? Clearly, nothing but another vibration. A vibration can produce only a vibration. What is it, Rupert, that translates that vibration into an idea? Is it the brain? But consider what divine gifts you bestow upon this physical and so easily damaged brain. You make it not only a thinker; you make it a careful, critical, self-dissatisfied thinker. I take my thoughts and examine them; I dismiss some of my own thoughts as untrue or as unworthy; I take those that I consider true and worthy, and I bring them into comparison with the thoughts of other men and judge *how* true they are and *how* worthy. When I write a letter, if I have the time and the letter is an important one, I read it over *to see if I can improve it*. I strike out a word and put in another which seems more accurately to express my meaning. I do away with a whole sentence, perhaps a long paragraph, or perhaps I even destroy the whole letter, because *on reflection* I am not satisfied with what I have written,—it does not say what

I now recognize I ought to have said. Think of a brain knowing anything about *shades of meaning*. Over and above my mental activity, clearly, there presides a judge, a critic, a self-conscious and discriminating Ego,—something which complains of the brain, something which decides and wills.

“ This Ego it is which takes the etheric vibrations from the optic nerve and makes them the idea of a flower or a tree, and perceives the relations existing between the flower and the tree. This Ego, too, takes the vibrations of air from the drum of my ear, and makes them the ideas of music or language, and perceives the relations existing between music and language. Just as the telegraphic operator receives and interprets messages, which the machine could not understand, so this Ego of mine receives and interprets the impressions which reach it from an exterior world. This soul in me, with its divine, living, and unmechanical power of converting vibrations into ideas, is a self-determining entity, a being which chooses and decides, which is not constant like a law of nature, but inconstant, wayward, wilful, and infinitely capricious. The bee hatched from the cell knows instantly what to do, and does it with mathematical precision. But



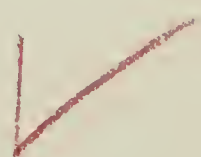
man, growing very slowly into a knowledge of his environment, does not do what other men have done before him, does not think as other men thought before him, is not satisfied with life as he finds it, proceeds at once upon an adventure of his own. No other creature is so impatient of tradition, so little influenced by heredity, so little reliant on instinct, so little ruled or satisfied by habit. The miracle of man is his visible history,—‘a history not only of gradual *self-adaptation* to a known environment, but of gradual discovery of an environment, always there, but unknown.’

“Do you know, Rupert, that neither Laplace nor Kant recorded ‘a single astronomical observation of *nebulæ*’? It is practically certain that they never saw a nebula,—never saw the stuff of the nebular hypothesis! Reflect upon the ideal concepts of man, the imagination of man, the reach, the grasp, and the longing of his understanding, and you find yourself passing through a gap in the hedge of materialism. Man is the one rebel in nature; and he is a rebel because he transcends nature. Where nature ends, as Matthew Arnold has said, man begins. It was declared by some eastern seer, and Bergson has woven the idea into his philosophy, that Life sleeps in the plant, walks in its

sleep in the animal, and in man is awake. Man is Life conscious of Life. And is it for me to prove that self-conscious Life,—the cause, not the consequence, of evolution—is immortal; or is it for you to demonstrate that it depends so completely on matter that without matter it ceases to exist? Can you prove to me that Life self-conscious in man, and given to man by the Life which existed before one atom of the universe was formed, is so isolated from the Life-Giver, so completely the body it makes use of, that with the disintegration of those physical atoms it ceases to be, becomes as if it had never been? ”

“ I do not feel that Life can ever cease, but I do not feel convinced that personality persists after death. I accept your life-principle, but I deny your soul.”

“ Some men hold, Rupert, that the Universal Mind for whom all things exist, and without whom nothing could exist that does exist, transcends personality. Others, like Lotze, declare that the ideal of personality is never fully attained by the human consciousness, and that ‘ God is the only being who is in the fullest and completest sense a Person.’ Let either school have it as they will. The supreme knowledge we possess is the fact of our own self-conscious personality. You are so aware of your own



identity, so convinced of your own character, that you take pains to deepen the one and to improve the other. You are not satisfied with yourself. ‘O wretched man that I am!’—is a universal cry of the human race. A multitude of men and women on the first day of every week, kneeling in the presence of the Invisible Excellence, cry out, truly and earnestly, ‘We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy Divine Majesty. . . . We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable.’

“Rupert, this is neither the groan of mechanism nor the cry of an animal. It is the cry of a spirit conscious of something to be reached at, something to become. This intense, this undeniable, this absolute consciousness of Ihood and of Responsibility, is not a speculation of philosophy, but the most certain fact of each man’s existence. You *know* you are yourself. Then, when a man, conscious of this Ihood, perceives from his observations and discoveries that knowledge can give no account of the origin of life on this planet,



that the physical world can have its existence only in Mind, and that the visible labour of the laws of nature is to educe a higher from a lower,—then is he not most rational when he concludes that his intense conviction of personality is the pressing intimation of a destiny which makes use of this planet, as he himself makes use of his body, a destiny which is infinite, eternal, and immortal? He need not think that he will be exactly as he is now, when the vesture of the body falls from him. He need not trouble exactly to define with himself what the term personality connotes. All he knows at present is this, that he is conscious of being conscious, that he is not part of another individual, nor depends in any real sense for his self-conscious existence on the existence of another individual, that when he says, ‘I think,’ he expresses a spiritual truth, that when he says, ‘I will,’ he proclaims himself free and self-determining;—and he knows that it is this sense of ‘I am I’ that is the immortal and imperishable spirit of his life, the personality, or whatever else he likes to call it, which will survive the decay of the body.

“The more aware a man is of himself, and the more perfectly he is able to realize himself, the more certain does it seem to



him that his personality is his very self and that this personality transcends the matter which composes his body. Compare, with the intellectual man, alert in all his faculties, rejoicing in his self-realization, and conscious of his freedom and his power, the lout who is scarcely aware of his own name, whose personality eludes his effort to grasp it, and whose life, if it be not, like the animals, walking in sleep, is at least walking in a drowse.

“ Self-realization, Rupert, is the passion of life. It is the supreme thing of human existence. And since this world proceeded from Mind and exists for Mind, and has everlasting purpose, the supreme thing of this world—that is, the passion for self-realization which expresses itself in love, in art, in conduct, in knowledge, and most of all in the mystical paradox of self-sacrifice,—will not perish with the world, will not perish with its physical vehicle, but will unite itself with God who is the Life and the passion of the Life. I cannot repair my body when it breaks down; I do nothing to change the various foods I eat into blood, nor do I exercise any direction in changing that blood into bone and tissue, hair and teeth; I am but the tenant of my brute body and know only when it calls for nourishment and when it refuses to do

my will. But I *am* my will. I *am* my soul. It is I who love; it is I who suffer; it is I who struggle; it is I who can be pierced by injustice, enchanted by beauty, exalted by love; it is I who passionately desire immortality, not for myself alone, but for those who love me; and it is I who hunger and thirst after the glory of God, hungering and thirsting because I cannot be satisfied till I behold His likeness.”

## VI

### CONCERNING PERSONALITY

“**T**HEN, I conclude from everything you have said to me, that our chief reason for believing in God is to be found in ourselves? ”

“ That is so, Rupert.”

“ And you are satisfied that you know sufficient about yourself to decide this tremendous question with absolute certainty? ”

“ With absolute certainty.”

“ But you will agree with me that in making such an assertion you cannot possibly be speaking as a man of science or in a scientific manner? ”

“ Are you still dominated, then, by a fear of words! The man whom we call a man of science is an expert in one particular branch of study. Suppose that an embryologist, who knows nothing whatever of astronomy, should say to you that in addition to the rotations and circlings of planets, the whole vast sidereal heavens are moving *onwards*, moving *forwards*, through space; would you say to him that

he is not speaking as a man of science or in a scientific manner, because he has not mastered even a text-book in astronomy? May the expert not know something else? May nobody speak but the expert, and then only as an expert? I know certain things: I possess a degree of knowledge: and I am intellectual enough to understand the expert in science when he can express himself, which is not very often, in the language of literature. If you refuse to hear me because I am not a man of science, then I say to you that you must refuse to hear the biologist, the physicist, and the chemist, *even on their own sciences*, if they are not also *psychologists*. For to speak of things with no scientific knowledge of the instrument by which things are perceived and their relations unified, is to speak as I speak of the world and its contents, is to speak not as an expert."

"You purposely misunderstand me. I do not challenge your right to speak, but I merely ask you to admit that in saying what you have just said about God and the soul you are not speaking as a man of science or in a scientific manner—that is to say, you have no facts in science to support this particular theory of God's existence. You must agree with me that my conclusion is reasonable and obvious."



“ It is only technically reasonable and only technically obvious. Let me prove to you that I am not splitting a fine hair. Knowledge, if it have any field at all, has the whole field of existence. The physicist and the biologist, as you can see plainly, only occupy corners in this field. Their knowledge is partial knowledge. You may read a whole library of physiology without coming upon one reference to the light in a woman’s eyes, and a whole library of biology without one reference to the comfort of a spring mattress or the delicious flavour of green peas. You will not tell me that a man has no right to speak of flowers who is not a botanist, or that a man who is not a professor of zoology can possess no knowledge of animals. Laplace, who drew himself up, was given a post by Napoleon, and he made such a muddle of it that Napoleon had to get rid of him. Frederick the Great used to say that if he wished to ruin an empire he would commit it to the care of philosophers. Let me suppose that you are a man of science, and that you find in your particular abstracted field of inquiry, in your particular detached idea, no need of the hypothesis of God: and let me further suppose that when I tell you of my conviction that God exists, you retort upon me that I am not a man of science

and can know nothing about the matter, that I am dealing only with assumptions."

"Very good! That is the exact word for my purpose. *Assumptions*—you deal only with assumptions. Mind you, I don't say that your assumptions are not well founded, but I do say——"

"Well, I should ask you these questions. You have decided that the world is not flat, and that it revolves round the sun: pray, how have you decided these matters? Answer, Rupert, in the rôle of an anti-Theistic man of science."

"We have decided those questions by the evidence of the natural world."

"Evidence presented by the things concerned? "

"Yes."

"Through what means is that evidence presented? "

"Our senses."

"But how do you know your senses are not deceiving you? "

"By comparing our impressions with the impressions of other men."

"Other men! But the senses of humanity may be as false and distorting as concave mirrors. What history have you of these human senses? Give me their lineage and describe their guarantee. Do you

gravely tell me that you place implicit trust in senses which have been derived on your own showing, by an accidental process working in an unintelligent slime? What an assumption is that!—it is the Aaron's rod of all other assumptions. Man is an accident, you say. But, goodness me, you place confidence in his senses, and in the mysterious nonentity behind his senses which unifies those sensory impressions and arrives at conclusions upon them! Come now; what would you say of a man who picked up a glass to examine some very small, some almost invisible object, without first examining this instrument to see that it *was* a magnifying glass? Suppose he picked up a piece of green glass and, looking at a speck of white chalk, told you that it was green. What would you say of his description and what would you think of his method? In other words, Rupert, why should you trust a single theory of science before the men of science have reported upon the intelligence with which they work? ”

“ I certainly think that we ought to know more about our senses, and in particular more about our personality.”

“ In other words, before any other *ology* we ought to have a grammar of epistemology? We ought to know how we know?

And we ought to know who *we* are who say that we know? ”

“ That would settle the whole business ! ”

“ Well, Rupert, we have made one very important discovery in this particular branch of knowledge. Psychology is becoming experimental, and is now somewhat courageous. We have discovered that the thing which calls itself the Ego, the thing which says, ‘ I think,’ ‘ I feel,’ ‘ I do,’ the thing which is our self-conscious self,—we have discovered that this is only one point of our veritable and complete self.”

“ What do you mean by that? Do you mean that a man only knows a point of his own being? ”

“ That is what I mean.”

“ But how can you know that there is a part of myself which I do not know? If I do not know it, clearly it is not myself? ”

“ Whatever inconveniences this discovery may present to you, Rupert, the fact remains that your self-consciousness is only a part, and only a very small part, of your entire personality.”

“ Oh, I see now what you are driving at. You are speaking of the theory of a sub-conscious self. I have heard the phrase. But what does it really mean, and how on earth can such an assumption be proved? ”

“ Nothing, I think, can more easily be



proved. I should like to tell you, if we had the time, of strange instances of what is called multiplex personality, and I should like to tell you about devil-possessed people whom I have talked to in out-of-the-way places in India—people moral and good, who, directly the evil spirit fell upon them, fled to burying-grounds, cut themselves with knives, rolled themselves in garbage, and drank the blood of animals. But this would take too long. Let me begin very simply. Have you ever gone to bed, Rupert, with the notion that you must wake at an hour earlier than your usual custom, in order, let us say, to catch a train? ”

“ Oh yes; I have often done that; particularly in the hunting season. It is certainly curious how one does wake up, and occasionally at the very moment one intended. But you don’t tell me that you seriously believe in possession by evil spirits? ”

“ Who is it that raps on the door of your consciousness, Rupert, at that unwonted moment? and who bids you shake off the final hour of your habitual sleep? *Who calls you?* It is not you yourself, as you know yourself, for it is that very you which is called, which is roused out of sleep, which looks hastily at the clock to acquaint itself with the time. But who calls you? It is

something, something intelligent and alert, *something that has its eye on the clock!* ”

“ I know! It is certainly most strange. But about devil-possession——”

“ Consider this further aspect of the question, Rupert. Dr. Milne Bramwell, who is an authority on hypnotism, told me some years ago that he was once so struck by the calm and repose of a patient, a dressmaker, that he spoke to her during her trance, and asked her if she knew anything about her mental experiences in former states of hypnosis. Now, you must remember, in considering this woman’s answer, that it was spoken during hypnosis. That is very important. She said, during hypnosis, to Dr. Bramwell:—

‘ When you do not speak to me, and nothing occurs that interests me directly, I generally think of nothing and pass into a condition of profound restfulness. Once, however, I had an important dress to make, and was puzzled how to do it. After you had hypnotized me and left me resting quietly, I planned the dress. When I awoke I did not know I had done so, and was still troubled about it. On my way home I suddenly thought how the dress ought to be made, and afterwards successfully carried out my ideas. I believed I had found the way out of the

difficulty there and then in the waking state: I *now know* I did so previously, when hypnotized.'

One could talk for a day on this single story, Rupert, for it contains at every point amazing evidence for the truth of our assumption that personality *transcends consciousness*. This woman spoke in her trance; she gave an intelligible answer to an intelligent question; she was in all respects a rational being. Moreover, she possessed a memory; she could go back in time and say, 'Once, however, I had an important dress to make.' . . . 'I *believed* I had found the way out.' . . . And, 'I now know.' But hear the end. Dr. Bramwell told me:—

'When she was aroused from hypnosis she had no more recollection of what she had just said to me than the man in the moon: she still believed she had fashioned the problematical dress in a state of ordinary consciousness.'

Dr. Bramwell challenged her on this point, and she said that she must have been talking nonsense in her trance, since she remembered quite well how she had worked out this difficult dress on the way home from her treatment. So, you see, the self

that spoke in trance had a wider range and a truer memory than the normal self: the woman in trance knew about the woman out of the trance, while the woman out of the trance knew nothing at all of the woman in the trance. She could only say that *it* must have talked nonsense—which is exactly what anti-Theists say of religious people, and for the like reason. *The waking woman knew nothing about the trance woman.* This case, Rupert, is one of hundreds. For the far-carrying power of suggestion here is a report made by Professor Beaunis to the Société de Psychologie Physiologique, and abridged by Frederic Myers:—

‘ On July 14th, 1884, having hypnotized Mdlle. A. E., I made to her the following suggestion, which I transcribe from my note made at the time: “ On January 1st, 1885, at 10 a.m., you will see me. I shall wish you a happy new year and then disappear.” ’

‘ On January 1st, 1885, I was in Paris. I had not spoken to anyone of this suggestion. On that same day Mdlle. A. E., at Nancy, related to a friend (she has since narrated it to Dr. Liébault and myself) the following experience. At 10 a.m. she was in her room, when she heard a knock at the door. She said,



“come in,” and to her great surprise saw me come in, and heard me wish her a happy new year. I went out again almost instantly, and though she looked out of the window to watch me go, she could not see me. She remarked also, to her astonishment, that I was in a suit of summer clothes—the same, in fact, which I had worn when I had made the suggestion which thus worked itself out after an interval of 172 days.’

Now, Rupert, this at least is certain,—whatever personality may be, it is something greater than we suppose. By that I mean, our knowledge of ourselves is only fragmentary; an area of our personality remains to be explored. Instead, then, of being at the end of this adventure which we call life, we are only now at the beginning. We have worked our way from the circumference—physical science—to the mystic hidden centre of life—ourselves, our souls, our bodies; and, coming to that centre, viewing the circumference from that centre, we find that existence flows over and beyond the physical circle, we see clearly that at every point of the radius it surges into the eternal infinite. So, you perceive, the field of science cannot be restricted by the man of science; the same curiosity, the same superstition, the same belief in magic

which created science, urges the mind of humanity beyond the trivial barriers which agnostic science has erected. Man will discover the world-mystery by discovering his own."

"Personality is certainly a great and interesting mystery. I must think over this business of hypnotism. It is a very good thing that reputable and properly qualified men of science have turned their attention to it. I should not be at all surprised if, through hypnotism, we came to learn something of very real importance about our true selves. But when you speak of devil-possession——"

"Well done, Rupert! You enchant me, and you encourage me."

"Oh, I am nothing of an obscurantist."

"Quite so. You are a man who wants to know."

"Exactly."

"And a man who will not easily be persuaded, because he does not mean to be taken in."

"I am ready to accept any hypothesis that really works, and to admit any evidence that is really conclusive."

"Come! you are at least a man who 'knows what is what.' Now I want you to see that before waiting in the spirit of Mr. Micawber for something more to turn up

concerning our true selves, it is only reasonable that you should admit, with a careful and judicious thinker, W. Scott Palmer, that this discovery, already made and already proved over and over again, this discovery of a greater self, a wider field of personality than self-consciousness covers, is as important and as far-reaching in its influence as the discovery of the radio-activity of matter.<sup>1</sup> Professor William James said:—

‘ I cannot but think that the most important step forward that has occurred in psychology since I have been a student of that science is the discovery, first made in 1886, that, in certain subjects at least, there is not only the consciousness of the ordinary field, with its usual centre and margin, but an addition thereto in the shape of a set of memories, thoughts, and feelings which are extra-marginal. . . .’

Admit, Rupert, in such good company as this, that a step has been taken, a discovery has been made, a truth has been ascertained, which, if it do not solve the mystery of existence, deepens our sense that there *is* a mystery, and quickens our hope

<sup>1</sup> *An Agnostic's Progress*. By Wm. Scott Palmer (Longmans).

that the mystery lies here in our very selves, closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet, and is here for our exploration. As for possession by evil spirits, I will say no more than this, that Tennyson probably said what was perfectly true when he remarked that in a boundless universe is boundless better, boundless worse. I have met men in London who have described to me that temptation pounces upon them, seizes them, drags them down suddenly into very ugly iniquity, and then leaves them, leaves them to hate and abhor themselves. Isn't everybody's experience of sin that it is not wholly himself who sins? "

" The more one thinks about it, the more one sees that life is a mystery,—a wonderful, a romantic, yes, but a teasing, baffling, irritating mystery. I heard a clever fellow say the other day that humanity is tired of thinking. He prophesied a period of utter indifference to the mystery of existence."

" Omar Khayyám and Solomon had the same feeling some centuries ago. The truth is that men of science and philosophers fatigue humanity by their jargons, and aggravate cheerful people by their attempt to monopolize knowledge. Religion, on the other hand, has dissatisfied the hu-



man race by trusting too implicitly to tradition, and insisting on a blank obedience to the formal regulations of institutionalism. But men *must* know; and if science cannot make knowledge intelligible, and if religion refuses to inquire, refuses to develop, mankind will make a new knowledge and a new religion for itself. And this is what is happening just now. Men have thrown off the atheism of materialism and the anti-Theism of agnosticism; religious people are beginning to throw off the traditionalism and the dogmas of an unimaginative clericalism. Most men feel that there is some kind of God and that they possess some kind of soul. The first man who can present to them in ordinary language the evidence for believing in a Personal God and in a personal soul will have more followers than Copernicus and more disciples than Buddha.”

“ You really think that there is a movement away from negation and agnosticism? ”

“ Of that, Rupert, I am perfectly sure. In England this movement is beginning; in Europe it has already gathered momentum. If you were not so immersed in the stratagems of party politics, you, too, would be aware of this remarkable movement. Berg-

son in France, Rickert,<sup>1</sup> Eucken, Windelband, and Troeltsch in Germany, Croce and Varisco in Italy, Höffding in Denmark, and Lossky in Russia, these men are drawing multitudes after them—multitudes of the rising generation. They are creating, without any exaggeration, a new spirit in the world. Life, one may say, begins to enlarge *its own borders*. The soul now looks out upon the indescribable majesty of the universe through a wider and a cleaner window. Men perceive that the physical world is for them but a small skylight, and a skylight that materialism has tended to darken with smuts. They look about for another view-point, and Bergson tells them to seek within. They look within themselves, and they find in their own conscious selves a window,—wider and cleaner than all other windows—through which they can behold the truth of existence. Humanity still sees through a glass, but not so darkly.”

“I have tried to understand Bergson——”

“Well, he takes some understanding.

<sup>1</sup> It should be interesting for pessimists and gloomy deans to know that Rickert, regarded by some men as the greatest idealistic and optimistic philosopher in Germany, is a confirmed invalid, and for twenty years has been wheeled every day to the University where he lectures. He is only 48.

But that is chiefly, perhaps, because he has something to say which has never been said before. Then, I think he is too desperately well acquainted with the terminology of science and the terminology of philosophy. He desires to say his new thing without disturbing more than he can help the definitions in those two dictionaries. He doesn't believe in controversy; he believes in truth and in the persuasiveness of truth. Philosophers are all a little afraid of each other. They dare not, for instance, write philosophy as Carlyle wrote history: they are terribly aware of the need for an exact definition of their terms. There is at present no magnificent Futurist among them. But I am sure from what I know of M. Bergson's friends that if you were to sit and talk with him he would be as lucid and charming as was William James."

"He makes a man think."

"That, I take it, is his object in thinking himself. But you know what he said to the *mondaine*? At the conclusion of one of his lectures in Paris a beautiful creature exclaimed to him, 'Oh, my dear Mr. Bergson, how you have made me think!' And he answered and said, bowing for forgiveness, 'Pardon, madame, pardon!'"

"What is it he teaches? I mean, can you give me a rough idea?"

“ He teaches, for one thing, Rupert,—and it is a most luminous thing, in fact a lantern for the rest of the journey,—that Life is for ever attacking Matter, seeking, as it were, to embody itself in Matter, and forcing Matter to do its will. Whatever Life may be, and whatever Matter may be, you find that the one is pushing at the other, and that this other is withstanding it. Somehow and by some intelligence the elements of protoplasm are drawn together: their coalescence does not result in Life, but opens a door for Life to incarnate itself. Life enters Matter. Now Life is not omnipotent nor omniscient. It makes mistakes. It gets into Matter at one point and commits suicide in the shape of the mastodon. It gets into the apteryx and loses its power to fly like the lark. It gets into the mole and misses the sight of the eagle. It gets into the plant and loses the power of locomotion. It gets into animals and finds it can advance no further. There is, in fact, only one open door for Life, only one far-reaching channel through the obstinate rocks of opposing Matter, and this is Man. In Man, Life finds that it can continue its push, its thrust, its grasp. In Man, it can discover and invent: more, it can attain to that which it seeks with intelligent passion,—the divine faculty of self-



knowledge, self-realization. In Man, Life can look not only with intelligence at the things about it, but at its very self. Man is Life's looking-glass. In Man, Life sees itself. Like Narcissus, Life finds in Man a fountain that reflects itself; but the reflection does not here drive to despair and death. Life desires itself. And in Man it finds, so far as this planet is concerned, its one opportunity for evolution,—that is to say, for continued growth, continued experience, continuous power, for increasing and intensifying the likeness of itself. This, in simple language, and without the scientific evidence he accumulates, is one of Bergson's teachings. And from this we learn to look more and more within ourselves, and to study Life as we find it in ourselves. Personality attracts, as a key to the mystery."

"I can understand what you have told me. But is this force of Life an entity, or does it become an entity? I mean, after a man's death what becomes of the Life that informed his body? "

"That is what we are now setting ourselves to discover. Philosophy and Science are moving towards the sphere of Psychology. I have already told you that we now possess evidence of a subliminal, or extra-marginal, consciousness. Men find in

the phenomena of what we call disintegrations of personality, in the phenomena of telepathy, in the phenomena of phantasms—phantasms both of the living and the dead—evidence for the belief that personality is definitely spiritual. We find there, at any rate, nothing to make us doubt our religious intuitions, much to make us feel that religion is God immanent with Man. I do not mean, Rupert, that Life is God—although, strictly speaking, everything that is is God. But I mean that Life proceeds from God, that it leaves God with a definite direction, but with freedom of choice. And I think that this Life attains personality in man, just as evolution in the nebulae attains form in planets and suns; and this personality in Man, so it seems to me, has the power, as it were, to weave for itself, out of its experience and the purity of its passion, a spiritual form, to become a self-conscious spiritual entity.”

“That, of course, is the whole point. Otherwise your Bergsonism ends in Buddhism.”

“But you know how Christ differs from Buddha. To Buddha life was incurably bad: it was forbidden a man to desire even good deeds, lest he be born again to the treadmill of conscious existence, as a reward for his good deeds. But with Christ

the word is, 'I am come that they might have *Life*, and that they might have it *more abundantly*.' Bergsonism for me is Christianity in Italics. Bergson's emphasis is Life, and Christ said, 'I am the Life.' He also spoke of Himself as the Door,—the Door of the spirit, as Man is the door of life. Do not think for a moment that Bergson uses the term Life as a man of science uses the term Energy. For Bergson's Life is veritable Life—a thrusting, desiring, grasping, seeking, and passionate tide of existence. Above everything else this Life can love. Look how it loves in the saint!—look how it loves in the hero!—look how it loves in the mother! Love is the keynote of human life."

"I suppose, then, you could make one gospel of the teaching of Christ, Plato, and Bergson?"

"The emphasis tends more and more to fall upon love."

"Of course, if Life really is a seeking and a thrusting——"

"Rupert, I want to tell you a little commentary which nature once added, very kindly, to my own humble philosophical studies. I had spent one day a number of hours within doors, quite lost and absorbed in a difficult book of philosophy. The term Life had occurred on nearly every page of

this book, and the total effect of my reading was to make me think of Life as a blind and mechanical energy; in short, as an abstraction. I rose from my reading, went into the open air, and the first thing I saw in the fields was a lamb. This lamb, four days old, was sucking milk out of a baby's feeding-bottle held above its head by a laughing child. As I caught sight of it, a truth of life flashed into my mind. I exclaimed, with an immense feeling of relief, with a delightful sense of turning home from abstract speculation to familiar and affectionate reality. '*Life is something that wags its tail.*' And as I continued my walk, I observed with a new gratitude the joy of all living things, their delight, their agreeable delight in the occupations of existence; and I said to myself, I will never again think of this term *Life* without remembering that it is something joyous and glad; that it wags the tail of the lamb, that it almost bursts the throat of the skylark, and that it shines with laughter in the eyes of a child."

"You would like to go for a walk in a greenwood with my baby, a three-year-old, extraordinarily fascinating, just beginning to talk, and astonishingly observant. She loves flowers, hates beetles, and is tremendously put about by anything that sug-



gests pain to her mind. On my word, you can see in her eyes something very like a spirit."

"It is a good thing, I am sure, Rupert, to remind oneself, whenever the mind becomes nebulous with *nebulæ* or mechanic with the too smooth-working hypotheses of physical science, of such human spirits as Rabelais, lying back in his chair to laugh, or Swift, smiling over an epigram, or La Bruyère, looking up from his deepest studies and saying to his interrupter, 'You bring me something more precious than gold or silver, if it is the opportunity of obliging you.' But I still think that the best thing to do with anti-Theistic philosophers is to follow the example of Christ and take a little child and set him in the midst of them. There is something in the eyes of a child, I know not how to describe it, which is not only the answer to many questions, but a reproach to misgiving and impudence. You know what Emerson said to his wife when she asked him for a proof of God's existence?—he told her that if she could not see God in the eyes of a child she would not see Him anywhere else."

"My dear fellow," he said, "I am delighted to know you are fond of children. I honestly confess to you that when I am with this exquisite Barbara of mine, I en-

tirely forget not only my agnosticism but my fear of a social upheaval. You must really come and make her acquaintance.”

“ She is too young for indigestible chocolates, Rupert, and hardly old enough for a fairy book. I will bring her a doll. And when I am with her in your greenwood, and when she is tired of picking celandines, primroses, bluebells, and cuckoo-flowers, I will take her on my knee—sitting at the mossy foot of a great branching oak—and I will tell her that the wax doll was once a part of the flaming nebula, that it is composed of the most distinguished and exclusive chemicals, that its beautiful hair, silken gown, and button boots all came from this same nebula which was once confluent with the sun; and then I shall tell her, solemnly and dreadfully, to give her a real idea of how hot the doll has been in the past, and how necessary therefore it is to keep it well wrapped up in cold weather, that if every particle of coal now in the earth was burnt up in one top-hole conflagration, the heat that resulted would not be as great as the heat which leaves the sun in the tenth part of every second.

“ From that, Rupert, I should proceed, if she were still awake, to explain to Barbara how it is that while she can walk and fall, can laugh and cry, can kiss, and make

ugly faces at people she doesn't like, the doll preserves a settled and an unyielding expression of candid indifference, and is unable either to cross a room or blow her nose like a young lady. In brief, Barbara (I should say), you are alive and the doll is not. If we can find a magician (I should continue) we will ask him to make your doll alive, and until we find a magician, we will pretend that the doll is alive in case we should hurt any vestigial feelings still existing in her nebular elements; but in our heart of hearts, Barbara, we will tell ourselves that we really are alive and that the doll—although some clever mind certainly assembled her elements together—isn't alive at all; and from this fact we will conclude that it is a very nice feeling to be alive, and if there are any rules or prescriptions to make us more alive still, and to keep us alive till we know everything there is to know and find out all the beautiful things there are to find out, why, we will get hold of them as soon as possible and follow them to the last letter.

“ But this, Rupert, is to play with philosophy. Let us be careful. Let us preserve a becoming gravity. At the same time, we will refuse to forget,—at least Barbara and I will, whatever you may do,—that nature has her jokes and that man

has his laughter. What a multitude of nice things has come out of the nebula,—laughter, whimsical humour, and lemons; how fortunate, too, that evolution did not stop at the gorilla. If it had not been for Man—can you imagine it?—there would have been no tobacco, no Gothic architecture, not even a single mechanistic hypothesis. Let us at least be grateful that life, which came from the nebula with Dick Swiveller and Peggotty amongst its other potentialities, such as Handel and Samuel Butler, did not cry a halt at the apes.”

“ One thing I must tell you. And I will break it as tenderly as possible. I am sorry to say that with all her good qualities, many of which certainly tend to support your philosophy, Barbara has not the very least idea of a God.”

“ What! ” I cried, getting on my feet, “ do you mean to tell me, Rupert (and I spoke very solemnly), that she is proof against love, and does not run to possess herself of beautiful things? ”



## VII

### LETTER TWO: CONCERNING THE TENDENCY OF MODERN THOUGHT

“**M**Y dear Rupert, you asked me the other day to give you ‘ a rough idea ’ of Bergsonism, and I made the best attempt I could at that particular moment to distil one drop of M. Bergson’s philosophy into your mind. Since then it has occurred to me that I should make the still greater effort to furnish you, inside the useful boundaries of a four ounce letter, with some idea of that general movement in Europe at which we glanced in one of our gossips,—the movement of thought away from materialism, away from agnosticism, quite definitely away from these melancholy and disastrous philosophies, and quite as definitely towards idealism and theism, or, as plain men would say it, to belief in God.

“ This letter, then, shall be an effort to express in simple language the general tendency of modern thought, not the particular thought of this man and that, but a reasonable synthesis, if that word be not

too pompous and exacting, of the thoughts of many excellent and unintimidated minds,—a gathering together of all the separate philosophical tendencies of which I hear authentically or with which I chance to be myself acquainted, into the one direction which seems to the boldest of these thinkers the inevitable direction of human thought.

“ The materialism which has influenced your mind, and depressed it, Rupert, had its rise, give me leave to tell you, in the decision of men of science to fix their attention upon the physical universe. For many years, men of science in their search for truth excluded everything else from their minds but matter, and, fixing their attention upon material things, apparently forgot the very existence of the human race. Humanity became a stupid, amateurish, and quite non-significant thing for these awful grim-lipped seekers after truth. But into what James Ward has called ‘ the mathematical ecstasy ’ of these physicists, came on a happy day one Hegel, a German professor, bringing with him Historic Man, Man on the march, Man the traveller and the adventurer, with his pilgrim’s knapsack of experience at his back. Some commotion, as you may imagine—for no man, least of all a savant, likes to be interrupted in an ecstasy,—

followed upon that introduction. Hegel's language, in making his presentation of Pilgrim Man, became the occasion of wrath and the subject of disputation. He had not chosen his words in a way to please the professors. Some of the things he said, so far as I am informed, were even decisively wrong. But while this disputation proceeded, and while one savant thought Hegel a fool, and while another tried to show that perhaps he was a well-meaning fool, there all the time, confronting the pundits, and obstinately refusing to be taken for a concept or a no-thing, stood Historic Man with his knapsack at his back. What was philosophy to do with him? How was philology to escape from him?

“It was urged that human history is ‘unscientific,’ and therefore cannot have any interest for the man of science. But a thinker named Merz pointed out that whether Hegel's introduction went as far as it should, and whether history was scientific or unscientific, ‘all that commands interest in the created world is the existence of individuality.’ He also mentioned that Laplace, in dealing with the general laws of motion and of lifeless masses, had left out this interesting fact of individuality. The philosophers took courage; a new

school began to open a shy door. Man was invited not only to enter, but to take a chair. A philosopher more daring than the rest moved a resolution that Man should be asked to open his knapsack of experience. The fat, as we say, was in the fire. At first, this knapsack, presenting difficulties, seemed to the physicist rather like an oyster really is to a man without an oyster-knife; but once opened there was no possibility of question concerning the contents, save only this one consideration, namely, how with the fewest mad-driving results to reduce that prodigious and inextricable chaos to some reasonable form or semblance of form. *There*, Rupert, though packed in utmost topsy-turvy—the tears and the laughter, the sweat and the blood, the virtue and the vices, the saintships and the devilships, the divine discontents and the animal complacencies, all mixed in extremest confusion—*there*, nevertheless, was seen to be the veritable facts, and the only veritable facts, for a vital philosophy of human life.

“ From that moment was a steady undeniable movement away from what is called Naturalism—that is to say, a movement away from an earth-fixed and an outwardly-directed attention. The attention of philosophy—and philosophers, mark



you, from Plato and Plotinus down to Hegel, Kant, and Bergson have been almost consistently Idealists—turned more and more inwards. Bergson, at the present moment,—perhaps the most inspired of thinking men since Plato,—approaches the very soul of man.

“ Philosophers, I may say shortly, tend nowadays to keep themselves ‘ in the presence of individual things.’ The battle over words is finished. Man’s struggle for rational freedom is recognized as a sovran reality. Man himself, ‘ as the historical animal,’ is considered all worthy of examination. And now, in France, in Germany, in Italy, in Russia, and in England, there is a movement not only to go more carefully over the accumulated contents of the knapsack of experience, but actually to look into the depths of the man himself. Science and Philosophy, in a word, are now face to face with Mind.

“ It would seem that there exist only two ways of looking at life,—the mechanistic way, and the vitalistic way. The mechanists say that from one thing—matter—everything else has come. The vitalists—need I bother to call them the neo-vitalists?—say that from the beginning there have been two things—life and matter—and that

without life, matter could never have come to be anything at all, must always have remained matter. Matter is the stuff; Life is Goethe's unseen weaver of the stuff. This unseen weaver spins the stuff into a multiplying host of things, things just living, things half living, things really living; but all of them things different from dead matter. It can be seen at work, this Life, for it has strange *regenerating* qualities. Even in plants these qualities can be observed. Break off a branch, tread upon a delicate flower, and the life within tree or plant will repair the damage. In animals these qualities of regeneration are greater still; life is able to do more in that environment. If you extract an eye from the head of a newt, the life within can construct a new eye. Cut a worm in half, and it becomes two worms,—two worms each with a separate existence of its own. Evidently there is a factor in these material things, psychical in its nature. Evidently there is a duality,—Life and Matter.

“The mechanist, challenged on these points, can only say that the mechanism does it. But note well, Rupert, he can only *say* this; he cannot prove it. And when you ask him why the stone does not grow and why a log of wood ceases to develop, he says nothing at all. He cannot by any

mechanical theory bring the petrol to the engine of the motor-car. Schäfer himself has declared like an honest man that he cannot account for mind; he does not pretend to explain the soul. Eucken says, with regard to the mechanistic theory of the universe, that he can agree with every word that Haeckel says; but, he adds: '*Haeckel does not say enough.*' That is the point—the something else in matter! Eucken insists that there is a Reality in the universe besides the physical reality; and he says that this spiritual reality produces *its* things precisely as matter produces its own things. There is a History of Man, there is an Evolution of Spirit.

“ Let us think about mind.

“ The rudimentary elements of mind are found in creatures lower than man. We find life in matter thrusting itself toward mind, trying to reach mind, and not satisfied with any degrees of mind. We get this dualism in Bergson, the dualism of a Life Principle working against matter and through matter. Need we be surprised, or jealous, because there are these rudimentary elements of mind in creatures lower than man?—but how could it be otherwise, since the same life manifest in man has worked its way up through matter to man? Now, obviously, this life-principle is of a

higher nature than matter, for it is the thing that takes obstinate and stubborn matter, and forces it towards mind, and reaches in man real mind—and by mind, I mean, civilization, culture, religion, and love. Matter refuses to be moulded without a struggle. It is only moulded with the greatest difficulty. *But it has been moulded*, and moulded right up from the lowest forms of life, to a Newton, to a Shelley, to a Damien. Think of human history, and then think of the history of Life up from the amœba to Bergson, Rickert, Eucken, and Bradley. That is a long march, and a march strewn with victories which make our Waterloos and our Trafalgars seem like the scratchings of children.

“ Men who perceive that this mysterious vital force is revealing itself more and more in the work it is doing on matter, conclude that to know life as it is, or to reach the least idea of life as it is, wiser it must be to study its highest, not its lowest manifestations. From the simple cell, which has no speech, they turn to the complex mind of man which can utter its thoughts. From the infantile mortality of embryology they lift their eyes to the starry heaven of psychology—a starry heaven, because psychology contains the music of Shakespeare, the smile of Cervantes, and the faith



of Robert Browning. The amœba, with all its good qualities, takes a back seat.

“What is it that must first strike our attention directly we begin to reflect upon mind? Think, as a mechanist, of your own mind, Rupert, and see how strange a thing it is that you not only take into your account this actual Now, this express road-hog moment of the Present, but that you rationally, calmly, and calculatingly look forward to next week, next month, and next year, that you reach back into the memories of your life gone by, back even into the yellowing experience of all man’s long, eventful history, back further still in imagination to a lifeless desert of a world and a flaming nebula not yet even the Planet Golgotha. Your mind, Rupert, creates a dualism in your life. It makes a difference in everything you experience from moment to moment, on the one hand, and in the general conclusions or systems of thought which you form, on the other, and this by means of the million complex materials which surround you in the exterior world. You are not a machine, though you call yourself a mechanist; you are a consciousness, a consciousness which has a memory, a consciousness which anticipates, a consciousness which rebels against monotony and becomes irritable under repetition, a

consciousness conscious that it is conscious. But a travelling, a flying consciousness! You never have a Now which you can really call your own. Hey Presto!—and where is your Now? This present sentence in my letter is reaching your consciousness, but before the first word of the next shall have caught your eye, this other will belong to your past, yet may be woven into your future. Is it not, Rupert, a difficult thing for you? is it not, to be quite truthful, an impossible thing for you, to think of this mind of yours as a machine?

“ But more than this:

“ Ruminare upon the matter—Bergson loves that word *ruminare*—and you must see that man the egoist has never once lived on his own subjective experience. He lives, and ever has lived, on what has been given to him by the general experience of the past and the present. This collective experience of mankind, presents to his own individual mind, to his own separate consciousness, a state of things higher than his own private experience. He recognizes in the general experience of mankind something that transcends his own individual experience. He knows this. And he also knows that he is bound to act in accordance with this knowledge. He perceives that verily no man liveth to himself.

“Have you ever asked yourself how such conceptions as, let us say, humanity and goodness come to you? You have not created them yourself. Your mechanical mind has not turned them out by its own grinding. They come to you from outside of you, from the world which environs you like the atmosphere. You form from them what you call a sense of Duty. You recognize humanity, you recognize goodness, and you feel in these recognitions a certain restraint laid upon your freedom. Duty!—that is a strange conception for a mechanical mind. And these conceptions, which come to you from outside of yourself, become what to you? They become norms, or standards, or measurements, for the acts of your own individual life. How do you act—ask yourself—in a difficulty? How do you act in a sudden difficulty, a catastrophe, that springs upon you out of the dark with serpent eyes and tiger claws? Yes, but how do you act in the simplest difficulties of your rational life? Think; and you will see that every act of yours must be influenced by these considerations of humanity, goodness, duty, to get its place, to find its meaning. You choose, you are free to choose, but your choice is guided by the movement of the world. If you were at the mercy of your own momentary

changings of consciousness, you could make no progress at all in life. Confronted by danger, you would throw up your hands. Stricken with pain, you would howl like a dog. Chased by disaster, you would turn and flee. But a state of things other than yourself and larger than yourself and higher than yourself presents itself to you as a standard of life, and this decides your acts, *and this alone accounts for your development*. That standard of life is super-individual, over-individual, in the sense that you must refer to it in all your transactions as an object. True, it is an object of thought, it does not exist in space, it is something you cannot lay hands upon or pick to pieces with a darning-needle; but it is manifestly *objective*, manifestly a *real thing*; you did not create it, it is an idea higher than man himself, it is an inconvenient idea to the vast majority of human beings; and your own individual development and the evolution of society absolutely depend upon holding this standard of life to be a reality more urgent and essential than any individual existence.

“ Now, let us go forward another step:

“ All the idealists of the world, from Plato downwards, have emphasized this fact, that man, in his best moments, real-



izes these spiritual ideals to be the things of extremest significance to his life,—greater than anything he knows and desires in himself—and that the whole meaning, value, and significance of his life lies in being true to this realization, being true to it, yes, and *developing it further*. Does not this thought give you a Deus in your machinery, Rupert?—does it not, indeed, make you oblivious of all mechanical symbolism? A man sees that goodness and love make a standard for his acts, that his highest life lies in dutiful obedience to this perception, and further that in some mystic but overmastering way it is laid upon him to intensify that perception. Every man desires his children to be better than himself. And whenever he acts in this spirit, that is to say, whenever he is at his utmost best, he sees that the social and moral and spiritual ideals of humanity have cosmic significance. He sees that the whole mental, moral, and spiritual evolution of the world would come to a smash if once these ideals were to disappear. He sees that human society without them is impossible and unthinkable. He argues and decides that their own value proves them to be absolutely necessary and absolutely true.

“ Now, another step:

“ Man grants to these spiritual ideals a cosmic significance. Out of this perception, forced upon him by the realities of human existence, springs the idea of God—or shall I say comes the emphasis for his intuitive sense of an Ultimate Verity to be honoured and adored? These spiritual ideals have not originated in man as an individual. They have originated as a very necessity in the upward march of the world. And, beholding that march from the lowest forms of life up to the noblest human creature he has ever known, individual man cannot hold himself from the conclusion that there must be in the universe, transcending his ideals in an infinite, an indescribably glorious degree, a consummation of spiritual life. And he cannot,—look which way he will—find the meaning of his own life, if he withdraw from this sublime conclusion. It is forward he must look, forward to God, not backward to an Absolute, if he would find any meaning, value, or significance for his striving life, or any moral permanency for society. Everything is forward to God, or backward to chaos. Man, as Coleridge says, must be either moving onwards to the angels or backward to the devils: he cannot stop at the animal.

“ Not what happened at the beginning

of things, Rupert, but what is happening now, concerns us vitally, can possess definite meaning for our minds. Look inward; force yourself to contemplate your own mind; and see how it is free yet restrained in its freedom by the standards of life which come to it from outside. See, too, that these standards of life, though they come from outside, receive their purest recognition from your mind when you yourself are at your highest best. Society could not exist without these ideals. The life-principle which has thrust itself into matter, carrying with it the germs of this ideal passion up from protoplasm to the souls of men, can only continue to thrust itself still forward through and by the loyalty which men yield to these ideals. And since it is still forcing itself forward, since it is still unsatisfied and anhungered and athirst for fuller expression, intenser self-realization, deeper and higher personality,—must we not believe that this life-force not only came out from Life, but that it is ever making its way back to the Life-Giver, bringing its sheaves with it,—those spirits who, in a dark hour and a long toil, with many stumblings and with struggling hope, have loved, if only with Haeckel's earthly love, the Good, the Beautiful, and the True?

“ This I believe to be the tendency of modern thought; and this you must believe, both as a politician and an individual man, is the one tendency in actual life which can assure to the world a greater civilization and a nobler human being. Your master idea, Rupert, has been the thought of evolution, but you have not ruminated on that idea. Bergson asks you not by any means to abandon this idea, but to turn it over and over in your mind till you get something more out of it than a bad definition. Stick to your evolution, but see what evolution is.

“ Note, first of all, that evolution is progress. But look; it is a progress that *alters* as it progresses. And look again: this is not simple alteration, but integrating, *creative* alteration. If an arrow became in its flight a golf-stick, or a cannon-ball hissing through the air became a plum-pudding, or a rock tumbling and rolling down a mountain-side became a sculptured fawn, we should conclude that in their several materials was an element hardly to be described in terms of matter and motion. But the mechanist sees his inert matter changed in its journey through duration to a living, beautiful Florence Nightingale, to a mystical, self-abnegating, God-adoring Octavia Hill, without the smallest misgiv-



ing, not that he can, but that he ought to be able to express that sublime change in terms of matter and motion.

“ Note, in the next place, Rupert, and take the idea to bed with you—for I fear another sheet may mean an extra half-penny—that evolution is *not* the mere unfolding of a scroll already written from top to bottom, every comma and colon in its place, not a blot or erasure from end to end. The original cell, that is to say, did *not* contain in wizard miniature all the species and all the generations of living things: the first cell that ever emerged was, distinctly and certainly, *not* everything that was to be. Everything that happened to the first cells from the very beginning up to this moment was organized and directed. Something within protoplasm forces and drives the unwilling protoplasm into that which matter itself never contained, even in the least degree of potentiality. It is not protoplasm that evolves, but the life within protoplasm.

“ Keep this thought in your mind,—one of Bergson’s flashes of inspiration, presenting for the first time to mankind a vivid and beautiful picture of life,—and you will see, as your favourite philosopher has well said, that in this view ‘ all is history, the result of effort, trial, and error; here we

have adventure and ultimate achievement.'

"Why does Barbara instinctively turn from a hideous beetle? why does she instinctively grieve for a creature in pain? Because she is Life,—Life pitying Life that has gone awry or is brought to inaction.

"Good-night, Rupert, and God bless you. As you fall asleep, let your thoughts fly into that boundless region where the saints love goodness more than they hate vice, where the mystics hear the rush of angel wings, and where the intuition of Barbara finds enchanted palaces, fairy princes, and horses with wings. It is an open question, says Mach (though his own name looks to English eyes like a truncated piece of mechanism), whether the mechanistic view of things, 'instead of being the profoundest, is not the shallowest of all.' The shallowest of all!

"Keep yourself, Rupert, in the presence of individual things, with this of Coleridge in your mind: 'A person once said to me, that he could make nothing of love, except that it was friendship accidentally combined with desire. Whence I concluded that he had never been in love.' "





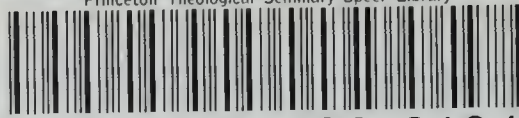


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